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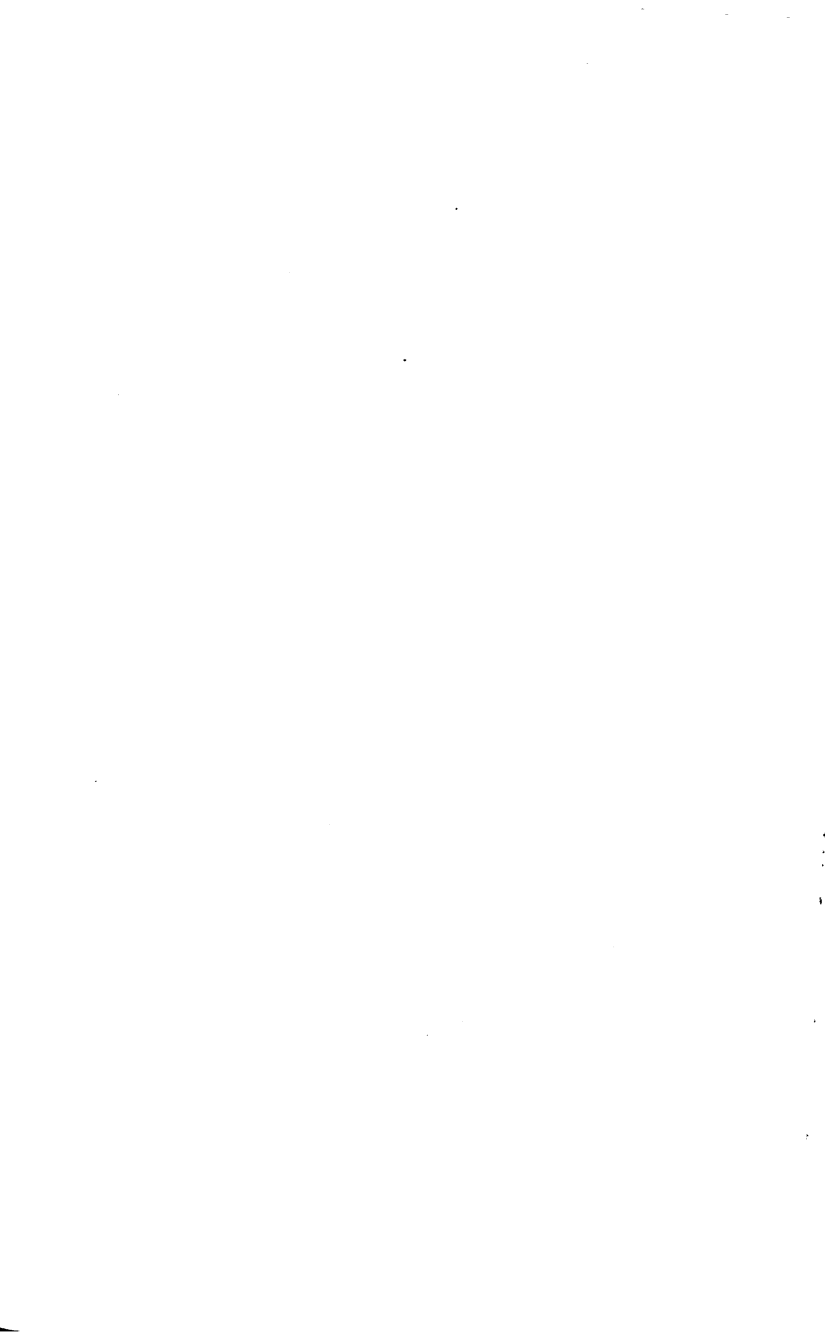
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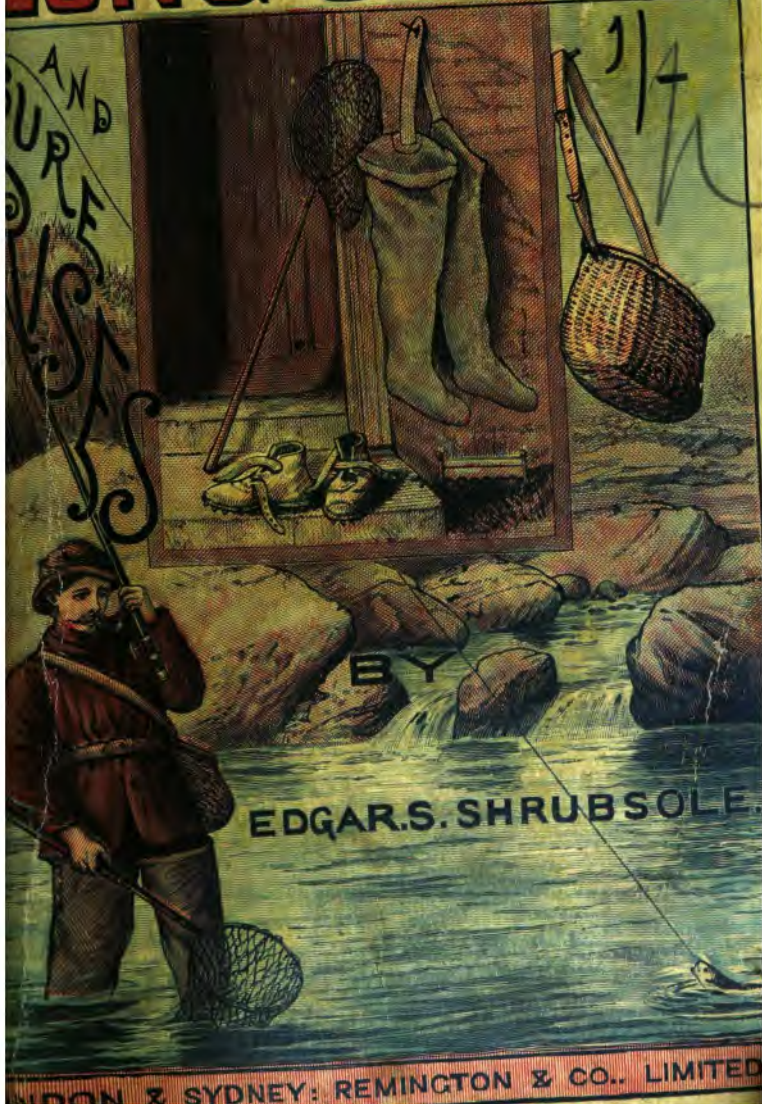
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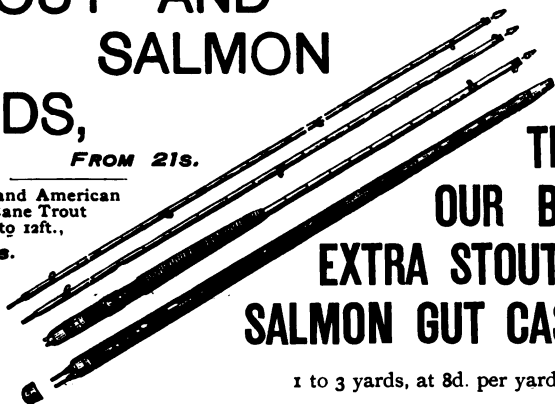
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Long Casts and Sure Rises.

THE STORY OF MAD MADGE AND THE PHANTOM ANGLER OF BROADYKE DAM.

In the winter of 18—, at the hearty invitation of a very old friend, I spent a holiday in the extreme northern part of Blankshire, a wild and rugged district. Through it flowed a magnificent trout stream, which, with its many rippling tributaries, provided excellent sport during the summer months for the angler who could put up with the long walks over extremely rough ground that were necessarily entailed in getting at the best parts of the stream.

I had previously visited the stream upon trout-fishing bent, and had thoroughly enjoyed a week amidst scenery of the most delightful description. Very frequently, indeed, my piscatorial efforts were suspended; often enough, just as I had made a cast over a rising fish, involuntarily my attention was taken from the fly that had alighted upon the surface of the stream, and became rivetted on the majestic surroundings. One day I traced the course of the stream for

several miles, and arrived at an immense dam that extended the whole width of the valley, truly a remarkable specimen of engineering skill, of man's persistent efforts to convert Nature's available formations to his own purpose.

The immense buttresses of smooth concrete, the main structure of the same material, and the massive sluices, windlasses, handrails, and accessories of wrought iron (painted, of course, the orthodox reddy-brown colour) at once convinced me that I had arrived at one of those necessary productions of civilisation—a reservoir. I noticed on the left side of the valley a winding path-way, with here and there a few primitive steps roughly formed where the character of the ground permitted it ; and, resolved to have a look at the immense sheet of water that must be above, I clambered up the valley-side. It was a terribly tough job ; but when I reached the top I was amply repaid for my trouble. Stretching before me—its upper end lost in the distance—was an imposing sheet of water, the appearance of which can only be expressed by the word—grand ! On two shores the banks—which had originally been the valley-side—were covered with trees and bushes of varied foliage. The hills on either side—imperceptibly reduced in height by the formation of the reservoir—looked down in quiet majesty upon the troubled waters ; for I must here remark that, although below the dam I had hardly felt a breath of air in motion, above quite a strong wind was blowing, and miniature waves lashed the shores of the lake, and again and again dashed at the structure that held the vast volume of water back.

From below, the dam had impressed me with its commanding appearance ; here, its gigantic proportions were more clearly discernible, and a mighty structure it was ! Of course, one of the first thoughts that struck me was, the reservoir *must* hold some big trout. I knew the 10ft. 6in. fly-rod which I had with me was of little or no use to fish such a large sheet of water ; and I had to be content with an inward resolve to pay the reservoir another visit when I was properly equipped.

Time was flying on, and I turned away to retrace my steps. When I reached the dam the afternoon was far advanced, and now the evening was drawing near. Then for the first time it struck me that I must be some miles away from my friend's house. I "backed" at the idea of walking through the valley by the way I had come, so I looked round to see if there was any indication of a road leading in the desired direction. Following some wheel-ruts leading from the dam I presently struck one : rough and uneven ; but still a road. I had not gone far before I reached a small cottage, in the doorway of which stood a woman, past middle age, neatly but poorly clad.

"My good woman, can you direct me to H——?" I said, mentioning my friend's house. To my surprise she answered my inquiry after the same manner as the one-eyed Irishman answered the O'Flannigan—by asking another.

"Have you been fishing?"

I answered in the affirmative, and then repeated my inquiry.

"They are devil's fish up yonder !" she said.

I did not think proper to dispute this remarkable

statement, but politely once again asked for the information I needed.

"They are DEVIL's fish!" she shouted, and went in and slammed the door.

I thought her proceeding peculiar; as it was, there was nothing left for me but to continue my way along the rugged road. Another half-a-mile brought me to a way-side public-house. I did not stay to wonder what demand there was for a public-house in such an out-of-the-way place. Lifting the latch, I entered, and found myself in one of the old-fashioned rooms, with sanded floor and rough deal tables and forms, that are familiar to anglers who fish in quiet country districts. Apparently I was the only customer, and it was some time before even I could get served. After repeated hammerings with my landing handle, a lad of about fourteen appeared, and I ordered a small Scotch whisky.

"We ain't got no whisky!"

"Then bring me a pint of ale."

After some delay it was produced—a splendidly-conditioned beer, served in a clean earthenware mug.

"Where is your father, my lad?" I queried.

"Out at work on the farm."

"Mother at home?"

"No: she's gone to the village."

"Any brothers or sisters at home?"

"Ain't got no brothers or sisters."

"No one at home but yourself"

"No, no one!" Then, after a pause: "Bin fishin'?"

I nodded.

"Then you want some more beer!" and he

took up my mug and departed, to return soon with the measure re-filled. I resumed the conversation.

"Am I right for H——?" He nodded.

"How far is it?"

"Under four mile."

I finished my beer, and turned to depart. Suddenly I thought of the elderly woman I had seen at the cottage door,

"Who lives in the cottage up the road?" I queried.

"Oh! that's Mad Madge. 'Ave ye seed her?"

I replied that I had seen her; but I could gain no information from the lad other than that "She'd lived there for ever, and was mad and 'orrid!"

So I resumed my walk to H——.

It was dark when I reached my friend's house, and he was getting a bit worried about my long absence. I told him the little I had to tell, and then we had dinner—a good hearty dinner. Over our pipes that evening I learned that the reservoir contained some *pike*, but few trout. When I asked my friend how he could account for that, he remarked:

"Oh! probably at some time a few pike have got in in some way, and they have gradually increased the while the trout have been exterminated. That is *my* theory. Some of the inhabitants have another; but, as that has to do with Mad Madge's history, I must hold it over until to-morrow evening. It's too late now for a rather long tale. Have a turn at the pike to-morrow. I have some rough tackle you can use. You might run against a large trout with a live

bait, and, if you do, you will admit that uglier specimens never existed than those of Broadyke Reservoir. *That* also has to do with Mad Madge's tale. Now, you have a treat in store for to-morrow evening."

The reader will gather from this that I had been questioning my friend about the strange character I had seen that day. All the information I got that evening, however, was contained in the above remarks. I went to bed and dreamed of leviathan pike and enormous trout that were hideously ugly. But the stay with my friend was brought to an abrupt conclusion. Next morning the post brought a letter informing me that I was wanted at home on urgent business matters. There was nothing for it but to go. My friend drove me to the nearest railway station ; soon I was being whirled to the south, and my day among the pike at Broadyke Reservoir and the history of Mad Madge had to stand over.

We all know that *the* time for pike fishing is during the winter months. When therefore, my friend repeated his kind invitation the following winter, I availed myself of his offer, and spent my holiday at his house. I had an idea somehow that I could manage to capture some of those big pike, and looked forward to several profitable days. I took with me an array of spinning-flights, paternosters, and live bait hooks, and (on the off-chance of getting them there alive) several dozens of splendid live dace.

Arrived at the end of the railway journey, I found my friend walking up and down the platform, stamping his feet the while ; for it was a bitterly cold day. To my delight the baits were

as lively as it was possible for baits to be, and we soon had them transferred to the dog cart, together with my rods, tackle, and travelling *impedimenta*. A drive through the clear, frosty air of that part of Blankshire gave me an appetite that took some time to be satisfied. That desirable conclusion arrived at, however, once more our pipes were lit, and the master of H—— and myself indulged in a long chat upon various matters. Many minor topics were touched on, and then my friend satisfied my curiosity by giving me Mad Madge's early history, so far as he had been able to gather it from the gossips of the district.

Little did I dream then that I should take a prominent part in that strange creature's later history : that, in fact, I should be immediately concerned in the ultimate fulfilment of——

But I am running in front of my story. This is what my friend had to tell me of Mad Madge.

"Twenty-five years ago," said he, "there was not a prettier lass in all Blankshire than Merry Madge Manton. She was the pride of the village down there—as well she might be ; and sad was the havoc she played with the hearts of the youths in the district : not intentionally, for Madge was never a flirt, still less a coquette. Beauty could not hide its charm, and Madge could not prevent her conquests. I am even told that often enough she was grieved at the disastrous effect of her good looks and winning ways upon the lads from eighteen into the twenties. But that is perhaps asking you to believe more than is reasonable ; and I will not press it. The only child of her parents, and the child of their age, for she did not put in an appearance until they had

passed the fourteenth anniversary of their wedding-day—need I say she was spoiled?—that is, so far as such a true-hearted lass could be spoiled. Vicious neighbours were known to assert that Madge was not a child of the Mantons, but really an adopted daughter. I rather fancy our doctor could tell a different tale. Be that as it may however, Madge grew in good looks year by year, until, as I have said, when she reached the age of eighteen, a prettier lass it would be difficult to find. Offers of marriage she had in plenty; but to all applicants the same answer was given—No! Less attractive damsels might observe that she ought to get married: probably, from their point of view, they were right; but Madge had not yet met a man whom she could accept as a husband. Her wish in the matter was very simple: she told her friends she must love him, whosoever he was.

“At that time the stream running through the valley was literally full of fat trout, and it was an easy matter to catch a basketful. It will interest you to learn that Madge had a great love of angling, and with the rough appliances at her command, was a match for many a pound and pound-and-a-half fish. It was her unfortunate love for the sport—for unfortunate it proved to be—that induced the Mantons to purchase a little cottage that *used* to be snugly ensconced in the valley just below the reservoir. Oh! by the bye, that reminds me: a Broadyke Reservoir existed then, but, although its dimensions were very considerable, it was not such an extensive affair as the present one.

“Well, as I have said, the Mantons purchased

the cottage in the valley, and went there to live. There were not wanting those who asserted that 'one of these days the old dam would give way and Manton's cottage be swept away.' Manton himself laughed at the idea. 'It has stood for fourteen years,' he would say, 'and I don't think it will give way now, just to spite me and mine!' I am given to understand that the old man had implicit confidence in the stability of the structure, and ninety-nine out of a hundred persons would have agreed with him in his confidence.

"Within three months after the Mantons settled in their new home there came to Broadyke a tourist angler, a fine stalwart young fellow, with plenty of money, heaps of fishing tackle, and more than the ordinary share of good looks. It was a rare thing to get anglers this way then, and his appearance in the district created quite a sensation. For some days he stayed at the village inn, where he not only made himself comfortable, but very soon became immensely popular. With song and story he entertained the frequenters of the Broadyke Arms as they had never been entertained before, and during the last few days of his stay at the inn he introduced trout suppers, free to all-comers. You may depend upon it that these 'went down' immensely, for not only were the trout of his own catching, but the drinks also were supplied at his expense. And here I should tell you that Harold Hartnup—that was his name—proved himself the best angler that had set foot in the valley within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. He soon found out that the best trout were to be caught in the old Broadyke Reservoir, and the manner

in which he caught 1½lb. and 2lb. trout there was a caution. He used to stand about mid-way on the old dam, and wielding a 12ft. fly-rod cast a clean line far out into the reservoir, and rise, hook, play, and land his fish just like shelling peas! It was his favourite spot, and although he frequently fished the stream below the dam, as evening drew near you might safely rely on seeing him there.

"Something else you could safely rely upon was that Madge Manton would not be a hundred miles away! Hartnup had openly expressed his decision to stay a month or more in the valley; but it was no particular surprise to the villagers when he shifted his quarters from the Broadyke Arms to Manton's cottage below the dam; and I suppose you can pretty well guess what followed. Hartnup and Madge were constantly seen together, and it was evident that not only was he instructing his companion in the intricate art of fly-fishing for trout, but that both were very busy falling head over heels in love. Later it was noticed that Madge was wearing a valuable diamond ring, and soon it became known that Harold Hartnup had asked Merry Madge Manton to become his wife, and she had said 'Yes!' It was all fair and above board, for the young fellow called at the Broadyke Arms and invited those present to congratulate him, and drink long life and happiness to his future wife.

"But it's getting somewhat late. Don't you think we had better go to bed? Old Hicks--- the man at the public-house you called at on your way from the reservoir, when you were

there in the summer—can finish the tale much better than I can, for he was present—when, well he'll tell you when—upon the occasion that Madge went mad."

It was a great shame of my friend to suddenly break the thread of his story thus ; but he would not continue it ; so we finished our pipes and sought repose, which for my part was very acceptable after the long journey of that day.

The following day was perfect for pike fishing : frosty, but clear, and with just a nice wind blowing. My friend agreed to drive me to the reservoir, and fetch me in the evening. On the way we picked up Hicks, who proved to be a fair specimen of the Blankshire type. I soon learned that he gained his livelihood principally by looking after the Broadyke Dam, adjusting sluices, &c., and pursuing farming in a small way. The public-house was kept merely as a convenience for passers-by and the few labourers who were nearer to it than to the one in the village. Arrived at the reservoir, my friend left us, and Hicks proceeded to unfasten a substantial but somewhat clumsy boat, while I put my tackle together. We soon made a start, and hardly had the dace been in the water three minutes before—bang! went the float, and, striking, I found I had hooked a fish. It fought fairly well, but when gaffed and in the boat discovered itself to be a big-headed, lean, and ill-conditioned beast. It weighed about 5lb., and should have weighed 15lb. At that time of the year—the latter end of January—pike are in their prime, and the condition of this fish prompted me to ask Hicks a question.

"Do you often get pike here at this time of the year in such bad condition?"

"Lor' bless you, sir! they're allus the same, winter *and* summer. Never no different." And then, in a lower tone, "And I don't believe they ever will be."

"How do you account for it?"

"Well, sir, p'raps it is there ain't enough feed for 'em, and p'raps it ain't. What allus licks me is, they're all about the same size—allus have been—that is to say, ever since the new dam was finished. There didn't use to be any jacks in the old reservoir. I've 'ad the mindin' of this crib the last ten year. The first jack ever caught was the picter of that 'ere one. I've seen scores caught in my time; and they're all about the same size and all as bad-lookin'."

"What! do you mean to say that smaller or larger fish are never caught?"

"That's it, sir; *and, in my opinion, never will be.* 'Ow they got 'ere at all is a lick. There ain't none up above, and there never was any in the old reservoir. Mind ye, sir, I ain't superstitious; but I'm darned if I don't believe Madge Manton's right!"

And then I remembered that my companion was *the* man who could finish the story of Madge. I started the subject at once. The earlier part of the poor creature's story was much the same as told me by my friend overnight, so I shall pick up the thread where he dropped it. I ought to say that, although I have altered Hicks' phraseology, I have not otherwise interfered with his story in the slightest. I may also tell you that while the tale was being told I continued fishing

(I must confess, however, that my attention was principally drawn to the story), and that I caught two more pike (I) both the "picter" of the first, thus bearing out my companion's assertion so far.

"Very proud were the old people, sir. Their only child had not only made an excellent match, she had obtained a lover who would beyond doubt make her a good husband, for if ever two young people loved each other they did. It was settled they should be married from the cottage in the valley, and one day Mr. Harold went away to fetch his relations to the wedding. He was to meet them at L——, for the little station below was not then in existence. Old Mr. Hartnup we learned had been dead for some years, and the only relatives of Mr. Harold who would attend his wedding were his mother and sister. Through some delay, somehow or other, it happened that Mrs. and Miss Hartnup could not get through until the following day, and a telegram awaited Mr. Harold at L——, telling him so. Instead of waiting in the town, he did as most young men would do under like circumstances: drove back to Broadyke; and got there in time to start fishing in the evening at his favourite spot on the old dam, which for some time back I had mistrusted. I told the Water Works Company, I told old Mr. Manton, and I told Mr. Harold. But they all laughed at my fears. The Company said that if there was anything wrong with it they couldn't see it; and that, as they intended to build a much larger one just below, it would last its time. That they did intend erecting the present structure there is no doubt, for Manton had notice to get

out of his cottage, as the ground it stood on would be wanted for the job.

" Well this particular evening the reservoir was full, and the water in the overflow channels running a torrent ; the wind, too, was pretty rough. I happened to be up at the dam that evening, and my old fear possessed me strongly. Shouting loudly, so that my voice could be heard above the wind, I begged Mr. Harold to come off the treacherous structure ; but he only shouted back his usual ' Oh, it's all right ! ' and went on with his fishing. Well, I was somewhat annoyed, sir, and turned and walked back in the direction of home. Nearly a mile down the road I met Madge, and we had a little talk. I told her of my fears, as I had told her many a time before, but she only laughed and called me an old stupid. By this time it was blowing a hurricane, and as the pretty lass—she was pretty then, sir,—left me, it was as much as she could do to face the wind. I turned and offered her my arm, which she accepted, and we struggled along the road towards her home. Presently we heard a sullen roar above the howling of the wind. She gripped my arm in a frightened manner, and asked me what it was. I told her I didn't know. *I dared not tell her what I thought—nay, what I knew it was !*

" The roaring increased. Telling Madge that I must hurry on to ascertain the cause, I left her struggling forward, and forced myself along the road in the direction of the dam. Arrived at the corner just before you reach it, I heard the roar of rushing water only too plainly, and when I sighted the old reservoir my worst fears were realised.

"The dam had burst !

"One of Manton's labourers was standing by, horror-struck, and I hurriedly asked him for the information I tremblingly feared to learn. Yes ! Mr. Harold was fishing when it burst ; as one enormous mass fell forward he had made a terrific leap to another, which in its turn fell away as he alighted on it ! He was swept out of sight instantly. My informant hardly had time to tell me this, when Madge came up breathless. As she looked upon the rushing water in a dazed manner, I suddenly realised the awful fact that her parents' cottage was undoubtedly washed away in the roaring torrent, and clasping her in my arms, I carried her away from the terrible scene. I felt her pretty head drop on my shoulder and her whole form go limp, and I knew she had fainted. It was a terrible night, sir, one I shall never, never forget !

"The villagers from below swarmed up, but nothing could be done. Our old doctor came to my house, and tended the sweet little creature who had lost all that night. He could do little for her. From one faint she went into another, then had hysterics, and then got a bit calm and began talking silly-like, the while she turned *his* ring round and round on her finger, and gently murmured his name. I asked our old doctor, and he told me : ' Of course she has realised what has happened, and God have pity on the poor child ; it has driven her mad !'

" ' Did we find the bodies ?' Yes, sir, and terribly mangled they were. Yes, all three—poor old Manton and his wife and young Mr. Hartnup. A sad job the old doctor had when he went to

L—— to meet old Mrs. Hartnup and her daughter. They came back with him, and such a grief-stricken party I hope I shall never see again. Poor Madge, of course, could not recognise Mrs. and Miss Hartnup, and the way she kept calling for Harold only made them sob and take on the more. Yes, they wanted to take her away with them, but a team of horses would not have dragged her from Broadyke. They could not bear to live in the district, or I verily believe they would have done so. So they bought the little cottage where Mad Madge lives, and settled enough money on her—in my hands—to keep her in comfort. They come two or three times a year to see her, but of course she knows nothing of them ; and it's a melancholy scene at such times, I assure you, sir.

"Well, after a bit, Madge got that she could be trusted about ; and there she has been wandering ever since. She goes out, and comes home, as any other person might ; but she's mad, sir, there's no doubt : melancholy mad generally ; at times very excitable. I can always soothe her, and there are times when I believe she actually remembers me.

"When they were building the new dam, she would constantly go out and curse the workmen, the dam, the reservoir, and even the fish in it. The men got used to her after a bit—leastways, most of them did ; some left the job a few days after they started work. Often she got fearfully excited ; but I was generally at hand. In her calmer moments she tells me often that he will come back to her. She always calls the fish in the reservoir 'devil fish,' and she will constantly

go out evening-time and call for her lost lover at the top of her voice; and this has been going on for near fifteen years."

Hicks finished his story, and looked at me as if expecting that I should ask him something; which I did.

"And so, I suppose, you really believe that Mad Madge has cursed the fish in this reservoir, and hence their ungainly form?"

"Yes, I do, sir; and what's more, I believe the dam is cursed, too, and that 'er lover will come to her; and, mark my words, something awful will yet 'appen before the 'istory of Mad Madge is finished! As for the fish being cursed, you should see the trout that are sometimes caught 'ere, and then you would p'r'aps think so too. Why the jacks are 'andsome put alongside 'em!"

I was curious enough to want to catch one of those trout, and, feeling sure from the sample I had that the pike in the reservoir from some cause were an ill-conditioned lot, I attached a spinning trace and flight to my line, and baiting with the smallest dace I had, started to spin for one of the "devil's fish." But my efforts were fruitless; evening was drawing near when I gave it up for a bad job, and told Hicks to pull for the shore. We fastened up the boat, packed the tackle up, and wended our way to Hicks' house, where I was to meet my friend, and where the lad had asserted that I must want some more beer because I had been fishing! We passed Mad Madge's cottage on our way, and I could but gaze curiously on the home of the woman with such a strangely unfortunate history. I asked

my companion if ever Madge spoke of her parents.

"No, sir," he replied, "she 'as entirely forgotten 'em. She never speaks of nothin' but 'er lost lover. My old 'ooman takes on at 'er sometimes about it; but, poor creature, she can't 'elp it."

I had some cold meat, pickles, and beer at Hicks', and very well they went down, too! By the time I had finished my frugal meal it had turned quite dark. What possessed me I know not, but as my friend from H—— had not yet arrived, I made an excuse to Hicks, and lighting my pipe went out into the open air, and strolled in the direction of the dam. The story of Mad Madge troubled me more than I cared to confess even to myself. The minutes flew by, and, presently, I found myself at the cottage. I felt a strong temptation to knock at the door—there was a light within—; but refrained from doing so, and continued my walk right up to the reservoir. I stood looking upon the magnificent stretch of water that was dimly discernible in the semi-darkness for some seconds, and then turned my gaze towards the dam itself. Very weird it appeared, with its massive front and buttresses standing out boldly white. As I looked I noticed a queer sort of yellowy light appear about midway across the dam. I rubbed my eyes; but there was no mistaking the fact. Gradually the light became larger; then quite strong; and in the brightest part I could plainly see the form of a nude male figure—hazily outlined, but, nevertheless, certainly a human form! I tried to shout, but found I was unable to articulate a sound.

I gazed spellbound at what I could but acknowledge was not of this world. And then—horror of horrors!—A wild shriek close beside me!

“He has come! He has come, my love is here!”

A grip of iron on my arm, and turning round I found myself face to face with Mad Madge! A second after, once more I was looking in the direction of the dam. The figure had disappeared. Cold night as it was, the perspiration poured from every pore in my skin. With a mighty effort I threw off the unnatural feeling that had held me spell-bound, and turned my attention to Madge; and only just in time. In another second she would have cast herself into the valley below the dam, but exercising the strength of desperation I forcibly held her back. At that moment I heard a shout, and looking round I saw Hicks and my friend close at hand, and inwardly I thanked God for it.

Of our short journey back to Hicks' house (Madge came with us); of the many questions asked by my friend; of the terrible ravings of that poor mad creature on the way; of Hicks' solemn and awed reception of my version of the strange occurrence at the dam; of the silent drive to H—— with my friend; of all these I can tell but little. To me it was as a dream. Not until we got into the snug smoking-room at H—— did I begin to feel anything like my ordinary self. Even then, mechanically I drew my chair towards the fire, lit my pipe, and sat smoking in silence for some time. My friend looked curiously at me and suggested that the meeting with Madge had influenced me, and that I only imagined I had seen the phantom on the dam.

"But, my dear sir," I said, "I saw the---something---before I knew Madge was anywhere near, and I had no more been thinking of ghosts than you had. I was as cool as a cucumber when I reached the reservoir, and distinctly saw the spirit develop on the dam. Moreover, I am no believer in ghosts. I have always argued that the ordinary ghost appears clothed or accompanied by something mundane, and that if the spirits of the departed can appear to us in some form, at any rate, clothes, hats, and other manufactured articles have no spirit, and therefore cannot. Now the spirit on the dam developed from a spectral light, and I watched it as it gradually assumed the form of a nude human figure. I am as sure that I really saw it, and that it was really there, as I am that you and I are sitting here now!"

And nothing my friend could say altered this conviction on my part. We retired to rest; tired and strained nature could stand no more, and I slept as sound as a rock.

It is wonderful what a good night's rest and the appearance of daylight will do to dispel superstitious tendencies. When I awoke in the morning, and drew back the blinds at my bedroom window, I felt almost inclined to pooh-pooh my impressions of the previous evening. A hearty breakfast, the bracing drive to Hicks', and a long draught of his grand ale, pulled me quite together again, and the phantom of the dam almost became a thing of the past with me. Not so with Hicks. He received us in solemn silence, and seemed amazed at my hilarity. 'Pon my soul I rather fancy myself that it was somewhat forced.

We drove up to the reservoir, and once more my friend left us to proceed with our sport. The boat was ready.

"Jacks to-day, sir?" said Hicks.

"No; trout!"

All through that day I persevered in every conceivable way to catch one of the "devil's fish." At mid-day we noticed Mad Madge on the bank, and at my suggestion Hicks pulled ashore. She came towards us, quietly enough, and for some little time conversed quite rationally with Hicks. Evidently she did not recognise me, for she utterly ignored my presence. Presently she started off, and we resumed fishing. It was late in the afternoon when I turned to my companion, and remarked, "Another run, and I suppose another big-headed pike." For, be it understood, while spinning I had run several of those fish, and they all turned out just about the same as the first one I had caught. This time, however, the fish showed more sport, and I was just thinking that I had at last hooked a well-conditioned pike, when my quarry gave in, and upon being brought to the gaff I found I had at length caught one of the "devil's fish." An ugly brute it was — about 7lb. in weight, black as a thunder-cloud, and with such a head and hook bill. Well, I never saw such a beast in my life!

"Curse it!" I said, and threw the wretched thing back into the reservoir. Without a word my companion rowed ashore; and then suddenly there arose a terrific storm of rain and wind.

"There allus does when any of those fish are caught," Hicks remarked.

I took little notice of what he said, for an uncanny feeling suddenly possessed me, and I eagerly availed myself of the opportunity to get back to the inn, where I found my friend from H—— awaiting me.

The following morning the whole of the surrounding country was covered with a white mantle of snow. Large flakes were still falling, and I determined to give up the idea of fishing that day; in fact, I had a great mind to abandon all attempts to catch any more fish from Broadyke Reservoir, for I felt convinced that the water held very little else—if anything—than the terribly ill-conditioned pike and repulsive-looking trout I had already caught specimens of. In the afternoon the snow ceased, and I walked to the village and called in at the Broadyke Arms. In the parlour I found several local "authorities" discussing a "ghost" that had appeared last night and the night before at the dam. Some little sensation was created when they found that I was the very person who had seen it two nights ago, and, of course, I was plied with many questions. In the course of conversation I found it currently reported that the "ghost" of Harold Hartnup had been seen fishing from the dam on the previous evening, and that Mad Madge had actually walked along the top of the dam and stood at his side, as she used to do many years back.

As even a ghost could not fish without a rod, and as I did not believe in the ghosts of fishing-rods, I put the report down to exaggeration; nevertheless when I left the inn and walked back to H——, I could not help thinking that there might be something in it, and determined to pay

Hicks a visit that evening, and hear what he had to say. I did not tell my friend of my intention; but after dinner, simply saying I was going for a stroll, I put my best leg foremost, and soon reached Hicks' quiet little inn. I say soon reached—by that I mean the time flew rapidly, and although I had a rough walk through the freshly-fallen snow, I arrived at Hicks' seemingly in "no time." I found him at home, and he very mysteriously beckoned me into an inner room, closed the door, and thus addressed me :

"Sir, it's somethin' awful. I can't stand it much longer. Last night I went up to the dam, and saw Madge quietly waiting there. When I asked 'er what brought 'er out such a rough night, she turned to me and said, 'I'm waiting to see 'im; 'e'll be 'ere presently!' She spoke to me by name, sir, and was as sane as I am! Then she went on to say, 'The end would soon come,' and a lot of other awful sayin's. And while I stood by 'er side, as true's I'm a livin' man, I saw a livin' figger on the middle part of the dam! The figger was about Mr. Harold's height, and the face *was* 'is. My 'air must 'ave stood upright, and I trembled like a leaf. Madge quietly said, 'I'm goin' to him, 'Icks,' and before I could stop 'er, she sprung on to the dam; and a minute after I saw 'er by 'is side! It was awful, sir, and before I knew where I was the figger 'ad disappeared, Madge was back by my side, and together we walked to 'er cottage, me being dumb and like a child all the way!"

"Tell me, Hicks—had Mr. Hartnup his fishing-rod with him?"

"Fishin'-rod! Sir, 'ow can *you* ask such a question? The figger was naked!"

A cold chill ran through me as Hicks made this statement.

"Hicks," I said, "I'll wait to-night, and we will go together to the dam."

And we did. When we reached it we were not at all surprised to find Mad Madge waiting. Mad, did I say? Why she turned and conversed with us as rational as possible. True, her statement, (quietly made) that she was waiting for Harold, might seem a peculiar one under ordinary conditions; but under those prevailing then it was not. *For he came.* The spectral light appeared on the dam, and (as before) it gradually developed into a human form, nude. But this time it raised one arm and beckoned. We did not attempt to interfere with Madge, who quickly walked along the top of the dam and joined her departed lover.

To say that I was not fearfully frightened would be foolish. Yet the fear that possessed me was very different to that I experienced upon the first occasion—a sort of awed feeling. I felt lifted from my ordinary existence, and watched coolly and quietly the two on the dam. Then the spirit form disappeared, and Madge was by our side. In silence we wended our way back. Madge left us at her cottage, and went in as though nothing out of the common had happened. At Hicks' house I found my friend from H——, and as we drove home I told him of the re-appearance of the spirit of Harold Hartnup upon the dam.

* * * * *

"H——,

"February 22, 18—.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—

"I am glad to know that you have quite become yourself again, and that you propose breaking your journey on your way home, and staying a day or so with me. I may tell you now that I think it quite as well you left us as you did, for some few nights after your departure Hartnup's ghost haunted Broadyke Dam, and the whole village became demoralised. Mad Madge prophesied the speedy approaching 'of the end,' though what she meant by that I am at a loss to understand.

"During the past fortnight the 'ghost' has entirely disappeared, and as I know you would like to see the dam in its present form, I repeat I am glad you are coming. The severe frost we have had has completely frozen up the whole stream; the cascades, and especially the main fall from the dam, are simply a magnificent sight, and will well repay a visit. Let me know by what train you will arrive, and I will meet you.— Yours as ever ——"

Three days after the receipt of the above letter I was at the little station below Broadyke. My friend met me, and as we drove in the direction of H——, he remarked:

"I'm very glad to see you, old chap; but you are too late for the fairy-like appearance of the valley and dam. The sudden thaw that set in yesterday has caused a total collapse, and it's nothing but sludge and ice-water now!"

It was getting dark when we drove into Broadyke, and we soon noticed that something of

an extremely exciting nature had occurred. We were not long in learning the cause. "The water is coming over the dam a perfect deluge," we were told ; "and strong as it is, it's doubtful if it can stand the immense pressure."

My friend and myself knew the fallacy of this assertion, but we decided to drive up to the reservoir, and on the way it struck me that such a thing was possible as the dam giving way. We all know the action that a severe and prolonged frost, followed by a sudden thaw may have upon concrete, and massive as it was, it was quite possible that one of the most powerful forces of Nature could burst it. We called at Hicks', and learned he was up at the reservoir. So we drove on. We had hardly reached the corner when we heard a shout—

"It's giving way!"

Leaping from the dog-cart, we hurried towards the dam, which we reached just in time to notice the vast volume of water pouring over it perceptibly shelve off, as an enormous mass of the dam gave way, and fell with a thundering crash into the valley below. The remainder quickly followed, and the terrific roar and rush of the water was deafening.

My friend, Hicks, myself and several villagers stood looking on, awe-struck. Then above the roar of the boiling waters a piercing shriek was heard :

"I come, Harold ! I am here !"

And there rushed by us the form of Mad Madge ! One terrific leap she made—such a leap as no ordinary mortal could accomplish ; right out into the foaming torrent she leapt. A powerful light

hovered over the spot where the dam had been ; in its centre could be seen the form of Harold Hartnup, and Mad Madge was received in the outstretched arms of "The Phantom Angler of Broadyke Dam !"

AT SLAPTON LEY.

A dip in the billow,
 A stroll by the shore ;
 Plenty of fishing,
 And cream galore !
(With apology to Mr. Punch.)

There are those who delight to spend a holiday amid a continual round of excitement, noise, and bustle ; others who assert that perfect happiness is to be found only "in a nook with a book" while a third section of society laud to the skies the advantages of a holiday in bed ! It takes all sorts to make a world. Most anglers prefer to spend their holiday far from the haunts of the cheap tripper ; away from the noise of popular amusements and promenade bands. By the banks of those

" Shallow rivers to whose falls
 Melodious birds sing madrigals,"

the quiet piscator finds peace and the much-needed rest from the hurry and bustle of business. Lingering by the weedy depths of the old millpool whose quiet is deepened only by the occasional cry

of a moorhen, the hum of many insects, the brilliant flash of the kingfisher, he finds soothing solace for his jaded spirits. Not for him are the merry-go-rounds and shooting galleries. He finds no pleasure in tourist-thronged continental resorts, "happy days" at Rosherville, racing up and down the Thames, or hurrying to 'Appy 'Ampstead. Popular sea-side resorts have no attraction for him; theatres, music-halls, and exhibitions are a bore; all he wishes is to be able to obey the father of all anglers,

"And be quiet and go angling."

At Slapton Ley, in South Devonshire, such an one will find a holiday resort after his own heart. Some might say it is too far from everywhere, but to me this is its chief attraction. You can sit in your fishing boat all day; and the while you puff the smoke of the fragrant leaf of the New World from the dusky briar of the Old, the ceaseless plash of the waves on the sea-shore—the Ley runs parallel with the sea for about two and a half miles, and only two hundred yards from it—the startled cry of the curlew, the plaintive call of the sandpiper, or the coot! coot! of the wild fowl—these, and these only will interrupt the silence. Your day-dreams here are delightful—but short. The float that has been dancing upon the surface soon disappears, and yet another fish is added to your catch.

The route to this angling resort is by Great Western Railway to Kingswear, across the Dart (by steam ferry) to Dartmouth, and then (by coach) to the Royal Sands Hotel, Slapton. It is an interesting railway journey, and the latter por-

tion of it is wonderfully pretty—it is not grand : pretty is the word—the innumerable small bays, the warm-coloured Devonshire cliffs, the quiet and health-promoting sea-side resorts, and, as one lets down the carriage window, the invigorating whiff from the “briny” on one side, and the aroma from the heather on the other, combine to refresh the traveller and to make him forget the long railway journey he has accomplished. You have no fagged feeling when you alight at Kingswear ; at any rate I felt nothing but a terrible hunger. Yes : I felt something else ; for I generally carry a pretty healthy thirst about with me. And I got caught at Dartmouth. A friend of mine had advised me to try the native drink—Plymouth Gin, I think they call it—and I did so. Now I am not the man to refuse a drink, but I’d certainly rather remain thirsty than return to Plymouth Gin. I had to swallow a pint of milk before I could speak, and then my language was more forcible than polite, I am afraid.

I consider the view of the mouth of the Dart, as seen from the upper part of Dartmouth, one of the finest in the kingdom. Kingswear is snugly ensconced on the verdure-clad bank ; Kingswear Castle is on one side, and Dartmouth Castle on the other, while the rich red rocks frame the broad river of glorious green, and the sea peeping out beyond. Some folks call the Dart the English Rhine ; the Rhine should be called the Continental Dart, for it isn’t in it with our lovely west country river.

The coach left Dartmouth for Slapton punctually. I shared the box seat with an angler also bound for the Ley, and when we found we should

probably spend a week at the same hotel, we got quite chummy—as anglers should. He pulled out an old number of the *Fishing Gazette*, dated July 26th, 1890, and drew my attention to what Mr. Fountaine had to say of Slapton Ley. I ventured to inquire if he was a constant reader of the *Gazette*.

"Oh! yes," he said, "I've taken it for years now. I've got several old numbers with me containing articles that I have read more than once. Do you read it?"

"Well," I returned; "sometimes."

"Ah! then I suppose you have seen some articles by a Mr. Shrubsole?"

I told him that I had noticed them. (At that time I was on the staff of the *F. G.*)

"What an awful liar that man is," he continued; "and yet there is something about him that is interesting. Do you remember his 'Bob Webb's Big Day' in the Christmas number for '89, and 'An Angling Incident Foretold' last Christmas?" I nodded. "Well, would you think that the same man who wrote them produces all those stupid lying tales, such as that of catching a pike with a slipper, or that of a pike chasing a man for miles up a river, or the other still of a pike with 7lb. of pebbles in it." I told him I couldn't see why he shouldn't.

"Well," he continued, "I should like to meet him, for he's undoubtedly an enthusiastic angler. Look at that 'Up with the Yellow,' he wrote a short time back. And then he goes and spoils it all by writing up a lot of tackle makers, and we all know what they are!"

I thought it was getting pretty warm for me,

and prudently reminded my companion that Mr. Shrubsole was not the only angling writer who wrote lying tales.

"Certainly not," he said, "but I cannot see the sense of filling a paper devoted to sport with such absurdities. Look at that tale of a perch that followed its master about, begged for worms, and ultimately got drowned—now, what sense is there in that?"

"Well, so far as that goes," I replied, "there might be some truth in it. I know an angler who caught a perch and took it home alive, got a shallow tin dish filled with water, and put it inside a bird-cage with the perch in it. The cage was hung alongside one containing a canary, and in a short time the fish was taught to hop out of the water on to the wood twig, and in course of time it learnt to sing—not quite so melodiously as the canary—but very passably for a perch. It got so used to imitating the bird that when the canary moulted its feathers, the perch moulted its scales. The end of that fish was lamentable. When the canary moulted its tail the fish tried hard to do the same; but it couldn't, and died of a broken heart!"

A long-drawn "Ah—h—h!" proceeded from my companion, and when I capped the perch tale by giving him my card, his face was a study. We got on capitally together, however.

The coach drive from Dartmouth to Slapton is extremely enjoyable. On the top of the cliffs a magnificent view of the bay and of the surrounding scenery can be had; the latter part of the journey is along by the sands, and we bowled over the level ground, sounded the horn, and

pulled up at the hotel in orthodox style. Why they call it a hotel I am at a loss to understand. I associate the word hotel with crowds, and a limited amount of "at home" feeling. Now the Royal Sands is a good old-fashioned country inn. You are known by your name there, and not as No. 123. You soon become friendly with the inmates, who are principally fishermen; as soon as you look at them the host and hostess inspire confidence and certainty of good things to come, and altogether you feel quite at home. I should take down "Hotel" and put up "Inn."

Of the delightful strolls with my pipe as my companion in the evenings, of the perfect peace and content that filled my soul during my short stay here, I must say little, but must hasten to describe the fish and fishing at Slapton. In the first place then, you can obtain permission to fish only from Mr. Dowse, the landlord of the Sands Hotel. If you stay at the hotel you have your fishing free; if you don't you have to pay two shillings and sixpence per day for it. The charge for a man and a boat is four shillings per day, and it is impossible to fish the water without them. The Ley is about four hundred acres in extent, and yields excellent sport with its big stock of pike, perch, and rudd. Anglers who have fished here for many years say that there are not so many big pike caught as there used to be. Of this more anon; I can only say that there are plenty now. One day while I was there two anglers had twenty runs and nineteen fish, not one of which, however, was over 8lb. On another day an angler landed a big-headed fish of 11lb., and another of 8½lb. When water and weather are

He'd engage the services of fishermen rare
By the week.

He'd go to good water—he got leave there
By his cheek.

He'd try single gut and twisted,
All his efforts were resisted
By the fish, his friends insisted

For a freak.

As years rolled on he continued to fish
When he was free,
And succeeded at length in gaining his wish
At Slapton Ley;

He was spinning with old Eli
When he uttered quite a wild cry,
Followed by a very deep sigh,
And a "d——!"

He thought he'd hooked and lost that fish,
But he'd not.
It was six p.m. when he struck—with a swish;
A good shot.

All through the night his heart was gay,
Thirteen hours he had it in play,
And Eli gaffed it at seven next day;
Great Scott!

If you doubt this, go to Slapton and see for yourself the fish and the inscription at the back of the case.

When the pike are on the feed at Slapton they will occupy all your time. When they are not, you can fish for perch or for rudd, with which the Ley swarms. I have taken two hundred and seventy perch in four hours and a-half, and three hundred and fifty in seven hours, none of them any size (the large perch in the Ley, although there are plenty, are not often caught: I suppose it is because they are not *really* fished for); they averaged rather under than over $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. It's rare fine fun, and that's all. Perhaps over-stocking has something to do with it; at any rate, out of the

hundreds I caught, not one would weigh 1lb. Here I would like to remark that very few fish are kept. What can you do with them? You are miles away from everywhere, and it's only when you are about to leave that you keep a day's catch to take back with you; or perhaps during your stay you may send a hamper or two to your friends.

What would anglers give for a few thousands of these perch for the Thames? Is there not some way in which they could be transferred? A small steam-boat could be run on Slapton Sands, some big fish-carriers utilised, and the fish taken to one of the many seaside stations on the Great Western Railway between Exeter and Kingswear, whence their transport to some Thames station should be simple. I am sure the Ley could well spare twenty or thirty thousand; those left—and their name would be legion—would fatten, and such a thing as to catch a hundred without getting hold of a few really fine fish would be impossible. In return for their perch the proprietors of Slapton Ley could receive a consignment of pike; fresh blood is wanted. I believe that one great reason of the falling off of the size in the Ley pike is the continual inter-breeding. Remember, I do not say anything against the Slapton pike fishing, which I think excellent; but I do say that a little fresh blood would produce a good result, and that twenty-pounders would be as common as of yore.

There are plenty of fine rudd in the Ley. The most artistic way of catching them during the hot months is to use a 12ft. fly-rod and put any attractive large dace fly or small chub fly over them. It is not unusual to get 20lbs. or 30lbs. of rudd in

a day. Casting a bunch of gentles after the manner of a fly with a 10ft. 6in. fly-rod I, in two hours and a half one evening, caught two hundred and fifty-three rudd, of which I kept one hundred ranging from 6 oz. to close upon 2 lbs. I firmly believe that if a few of the deeper parts of the Ley were cleared of the weeds on the bottom, and properly baited, a marvellous catch of rudd would result. I take it for granted of course, that the cleared spots would be fished in the well-known Lea tight-line style. If you run short of baits when pike fishing here, the boatman takes you to some of the reeds, and in a quarter-of-an-hour, fishing about a foot or 18in. deep, you have plenty to go on with.

Can I say more to recommend this fishery to my readers? If so, please suppose it said. As many know, my experiences of English fisheries are pretty wide; and without hesitation I say that this is one of the best public coarse fisheries we have. It is quiet, it is healthy, and it provides excellent sport. Good accommodation and a very liberal table will be found at the hotel, and charges are moderate. Those who are fond of shooting will find plenty of use for their cartridges here. Ten guns in one winter's day had seventeen hundred head of wild fowl. Mr. Dowse has about two thousand five hundred acres of ground to shoot over, and in addition to the wild fowl, pheasants, partridges, etc. give grand sport.

Within five miles is one of the finest sea fishing grounds on the west coast -- I allude to that part of Start Bay close to Start Point. The tourist will find pleasure trips by coach and by

boat, and grand sea bathing, without those abominable bathing machines ; artists will find subjects for their pencil and brush ; the geologist material for his hammer ; and botanists some of the best Devonshire ferns.

For the angler Slapton is a delight. If he prove that fact for himself as the result of reading this article, he will not be more pleased than the writer of it.

“UP WITH THE YELLOW.”

A DAMP, dull, dismal morning; a deplorable drizzling rain; a detestable, depressing, “dem’d awful” outlook—east, north, west, and south; to cap all, a railway journey without a friend, for my intended companion did not “turn up” at the railway station. Rather a bad beginning for a day’s trout fishing, eh?

Yet as we rushed through the quiet country, soothed by a pipe of the weed some faddists would tell us is rank poison, I was eagerly anticipating the steady rise in pools, streams, and glassy glides I know so well, of pound-and-a-half trout; my trusty rod was already bowing to the efforts of the well-conditioned fish to escape, and involuntarily I looked towards my landing-net to make sure I had it with me. For be it known, oh! gentle reader, I am no believer in throwing up the sponge until a fight has been thoroughly fought. One never knows how near victory is especially when trout fishing. Why, some of my best days have been when wind, weather, and everything but water, have been dead against sport, judged from a “when the wind is in the south,” etc., point of view.

Yet Mark Tapley would have had good cause to be proud of being "jolly" had he been placed as I was. At the station before that at which I was to alight, a local gentleman, exhibiting unmistakable signs of agricultural pursuits, told me there had been a tremendous downpour of rain during the night up the valley, "an' fur zertain, zur, t't river 'll be flooded afore dinner." However, when I got by the river-side the water was coming down about right; and so, notwithstanding that the rain still persisted in drizzling, and things generally looked anything but promising, I put up my rod and prepared for the fray.

While thus engaged I noticed a rise a few yards away, and securely mounting a light Blue Quill, I soon had it over the fish, and the fish in my net. It was barely a half-pounder, so it went back; for on the water I was fishing you are not supposed to take fish less than $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., and as there are plenty over a pound I generally give limit fish the benefit of the doubt. Not a bad beginning; and a little further on another, and yet another under-sized fish was returned. Then I came to a favourite stretch where, on the right bank, the river is very shallow, gradually deepening towards the left bank, which is fringed with bushes, under which a strong, deep stream flows and heavy fish are wont to lie. It is easily fished (comparatively) when the wind is favourable; but in an awkward wind it would make the editor of a religious magazine quote a profane author.

When I reached the stream the wind was not bad and not good. As I stood watching for a rise the rain ceased to drizzle, and the atmosphere

quite suddenly became much warmer. Not a fish was moving, not a fly was on the water. Very carefully I peered forward into the green depths of the stream, and presently I saw a good fish steadily swim out into a feeding position. He certainly wanted a fly, and I tried him with the Blue Quill; but my gentleman ignored it as it floated by him with its little wings cocked up—a perfect picture. He was worth a little attention, so I tried two or three different patterns over him. All to no purpose. Then I changed to *the* Yellow Dun (my favourite fly), and at the first cast I had him. He took it as a child takes barley-sugar—right in his mouth; and with a shake of his head went away like the good fish that he was, surprised at his want of caution, undoubtedly, and disgusted with himself for having been so easily deceived. He showed good sport, but had to yield in the end; and as I laid him in the bottom of my creel I could not but admire his shape, size, and condition. I am afraid that I had thoughts also of what a toothsome breakfast he would make.

A few yards farther on in the same stream the dainty yellow was again deliberately sucked in, and, as I tightened on the fish, the bold plunge and heavy strain upon the line told me that I had another trout, which, if successfully brought to the net, would not have to be returned through being under-sized. It was so.

After this I fished more than half-a-mile of the water without adding another to my store. Many pools, streams, holes, and shallows I had to pass, from which in ordinary conditions I should have been bound to get a fish. The river was rising, and would soon begin to colour, and then I knew

—good-bye to the fishing for to-day ! It had commenced drizzling again, and altogether it was rough, I can tell you.

I had changed my fly several times and had got on a small "Greenwell's Glory" when I arrived at a famous pool just below a bridge crossing the river. Very carefully I whipped that pool all over. Result, not a fin. Without doubt the fish were right in under the bridge ; so, wading quietly and carefully out into the middle of the pool, I sent the Greenwell on a journey of inspection under the bridge. It was by no means an easy cast, but the fly settled upon the water very tolerably, and then I saw a fine fish undecidedly move towards it, and then sink back into the green depths. He didn't care for Glory in that guise. Without a moment's hesitation I put on a Yellow Dun again, and then followed a busy twenty minutes or so. As I made my first cast with the "Yellow," a puff of wind took it right under the bridge, and it settled upon the water in such a manner that I knew if a fish there wanted a fly he'd be bound to take this one. I would here remark that only about 3ft. 6in. was the distance from the surface of the water to the under part of the bridge.

Well that "Yellow" didn't have to sail far. A steady business-like rise, immediately responded to on my part, and away went the gallant fish bang under the bridge, clean out of sight. Here was a pretty pickle. I knew that above the bridge the river was weedy, and for all I knew the fish had run into the weed. I did what I always do in such a case : I kept a steady strain upon the fish. Presently he eased down through

the bridge, and came out into the pool, and then I knew I had my gentleman—for I took good care that he didn't take another walk up stream. He shook his head in an angry manner as I led him towards the net, and turned over on his side as I slipped it under him—as plucky a two-pounder as it has been my lot to kill.

I was afraid the antics of my last fish had disturbed the others, but could not leave such a likely spot without another cast or two. Once more, therefore, the Yellow was sent on a journey under the bridge. The wind that had favoured me before was kind enough to hitch my fly in a little crevice in the bridge this time; however, a gentle tug released it, and it fell clean into the open mouth of a trout! For a second I could hardly realise that the fish had taken my fly; but an involuntary action of my wrist tightened on him, and away he came, clean down the pool, right by me, tumbling over the shallow before, and ultimately resting in a deep hole about 15 yards below me. I cautiously waded down towards him, and having got on the right side (literally) of him, proceeded to let him know that a 10ft. rod decently handled was more than he could put up with for long. We argued this point for several minutes, but in the end I proved right, and completed my second brace to the delightful music of the creaking of the lid of my creel.

Two or three ineffectual casts under the bridge again, and I moved farther on, for I knew that every quarter-of-an-hour brought me nearer the time when the state of the water would compel me to

stop fishing. The next stretch of water I operated upon is very difficult to fish : for about two hundred yards the banks of the river are heavily wooded, the trees from either side, for the greater part, meeting. The river is very weedy here also, and the angler has to have the temper of an angel and the patience of Job to fish it. I waded into the water, and slowly proceeded up stream. Presently I noticed a very decent trout, and prepared to place the Yellow over him. I was carefully working out sufficient line to reach him, and having got enough, switched it forward, and turned to judge the trees so I did not catch up in making my cast, when I felt a tug. Luckily my line was clear, and the winch sang out merrily as a good fish made a rush up stream, and then came clean out of the water—"more than a pound of him," I told myself. He had evidently meant taking that fly, for to the best of 'my belief it must have been under water. As he fell back into the river he made a plunge, and then a pull and a jerk told me he was in a weed. There was nothing left to be done but to keep on a steady strain, and trust to the fish clearing himself. This eventually he did ; and as I gently led him to my net, carefully lifted him from his native element, and transferred him to my creel, I found I was quite right in my conjecture, he was over a pound.

This bit of fun disturbed the fish I really intended trying for ; but a grand rise in front of me accelerated the action of my heart, and I turned my attention to the fish that had risen. Thank goodness ! He was in a pool clear of weeds, and if I could only manipulate my fly properly that fish was mine for a certainty. By creeping under

the boughs, and working my line close to the surface of the water, I succeeded in "snicking" the Yellow just about a yard above the rising fish. He didn't wait for it to reach him. He went for it like a needle to a magnet, and it was some minutes before he joined his brethren in my creel, and so completed my third brace.

As I waded out of the stream, and started along the bank for another spot which I knew well would hold a good fish, my friend "showed up," clad in a long waterproof which reached to his heels, and a "sou-wester" that would have well graced a coal-heaver. He reckoned it was no use fishing on such a day, and seemed surprised when I told him I intended keeping on so long as the water was at all decent. He asserted I must be a born idiot to fish in such weather; but when I showed him the half-dozen trout I had, his eyes and mouth opened, and his congratulations were hearty and sincere. There is no doubt I deserved the fish; it wasn't a case of chuck-and-chance-it, I can assure you.

Together we walked to a spot where the only chance of getting a fly on the water was to work it very carefully between an alder and a thorn-bush, which were only about five feet apart. Two good friends, eh? Peering between them I perceived a lusty trout quietly poisoning himself in the pool below. It was a long shot, and a difficult one that would reach him; but by carefully working out my line in the meadow, and then gradually approaching the aperture between the alder and the thorn-bush, I managed to send the Yellow in the desired direction. It alighted quite

two yards above the fish, and as the stream here ran very slow and deep, it seemed an age before it reached him. When it did, it sailed clean over his nose; and I was just going to pick my line off the water in disgust, when he turned lazily round, gave a wag of his broad tail, and deliberately sucked in my fly. Gentle reader, you probably know what it is to hit a fish like that, with a lot of slack line on the water, an alder on one side of you, a thorn-bush the other, the trees in every direction. That fish must have "eat" that fly, for such a muff of a strike is not often seen as the one with which I hooked him. However, the plunge told me I had him on, and quickly lowering my rod (I dared not keep it up for fear of a tangle among the bushes), I played him much after the manner one has to play a chub under like circumstances, that is anyhow I could. Well, he bored about for some time in the pool; but at length my friend had the net under him, and whipped him out upon the bank. When I went to the net to take the hook out, I found I was saved the trouble, for the hold gave way as the fish was laid on the bank. Quite near enough that! My seventh fish was a good pound weight.

And now the drizzle turned to a sharp shower; and, drenched to the skin almost, (for I hate a macintosh), I reluctantly came to the conclusion that I had better turn it up for the day. The water was getting slightly coloured; and I knew I had only about another half-an-hour's fishing, and hardly thought it worth while continuing against such odds. So we turned to retrace our steps. When we came to the bridge where I had caught

the brace in the earlier part of the morning, I could not resist the temptation of making a trial cast down stream. I took a long shot, and lost sight of my fly in the driving rain, although I knew it was somewhere under or near to the bridge. Presently—tug ! and turning to my friend, I quietly remarked, "He's on !" Oh ! the capers that fish had ! Down came the rain—a perfect deluge ! What cared we ? I knew I had a good fish on, and meant creeling it if possible. Presently the 10ft. of built-cane told its tale, and we had a sight of the fish—a regular beauty. Soon after the net was brought into use, and another two-pounder was added to our creel.

The water was now coming down almost un-fishable ; but breaking off the very fine end of my cast, I mounted a Yellow Dun of the same pattern, but a size larger, and hurried down to the stream where I killed the first fish of the day. Getting in below, and fishing it up, I hooked a trout of about 7oz., which I returned. The rain suddenly ceased ; the water was rapidly colouring, and I made my last cast of the day. I believe the spirit of Izaak Walton watches over persevering anglers, for a grand fish rolled right over my fly, and, striking, I had him ! He showed such a fight as is seldom seen, and no wonder. When landed (as of course he was ultimately) he proved to be foul-hooked—the Yellow was firmly imbedded in the root of one of his pectoral fins !

With this fish I ended my day (or rather half-day). We got back to a snug little cottage on the estate. I took off my waders, had my coat, &c. dried, made a hearty meal off country-cured

ham and new laid eggs ; and soon afterward the train was whirling us back to town.

I don't often weigh my fish, but this four and a-half brace looked so pretty that I thought I would weigh them. The nine fish weighed $13\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. exactly.

Now for the lesson this day's fishing (which is a faithful record) should teach those who read this article : Never say die ; and when everything seems against a successful day's fishing, "Up with the Yellow!" It will not disappoint you. I've killed fish with it all over England, and all through the season. I have good reason to think highly of it, not only because of the sport I have had with it, but because it was brought to my notice first by one of the best dry-fly fishermen of the day. He used it during the whole of the first day's fishing we ever had together, now several years ago, and killed ten and a-half brace of trout varying from 1 lb. to $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb. upon the same waters as those on which the few hours' fishing I have just described took place. It was a very enjoyable day, wasn't it, Mr. Marston ?

But there are Yellows and Yellows. Some dressed are no more like the real thing than Piccadilly is like a porridge pot. Here is the dressing I refer to : Body, primrose yellow worsted ; two or three strands of pale buff cochin cock for tail ; hackle from the same feather ; wings, palest starling. Hook for general use, 00. Have a few dressed upon 0 and 1 hooks for exceptional circumstances.

THREE DELIGHTFUL DAYS.

The first of the three occurred several years ago; the second a few short months back only; and the third within twenty-four hours of the second. How the first led to the second and third, and why the three stand out so prominently from the many pleasant days I have spent by the river side, intent upon the sport that (in my estimation) is far superior to all others—I allude to fly-fishing for trout—I will endeavour to tell in this article.

I was sitting at home one morning satisfying an appetite that is enjoyed by such youths as those who live in the country, and think nothing of a ten-mile run with the "Hare and Hounds" Club, a long day's cricket under a broiling sun, a two mile spin in an out-rigged sculling boat, a rough-and-tumble at a game of football, or a twenty-five or thirty mile walk on a "day off"; and having disposed of a breakfast that would well serve me twice now, I turned my attention to an important letter lying by my side. It *was* an important letter, and no mistake. Looking back through the years that have passed, I would emphasise that assertion, and say it was a *very*

important letter, and being of such importance it is necessary that I should tell how it came to be sent to me.

Notwithstanding my great love for cricket, etc., I had developed an enthusiasm for trout fishing, and being happily privileged to fish a well-stocked preserve, my opportunities for "trying my hand" were many. Somehow or other, however, I could not get on to my satisfaction—something always went wrong, and I had seldom more than a brace of trout to take home after a hard day's fishing. The fish were there—it was no use disputing that fact; but, as the keeper frequently told me, "They are artful, they are, sir, and very sly." Thus, probably unconsciously, repeating the words of one famous Joey B.; Sir! True, very frequently a silly 4oz. fish would dash at my fly, and shortly afterwards lie quivering upon the bank; but the owner of the water had informed me very emphatically that no small fish might be retained, and so the troutlings had to be returned to their native element. Nothing but artificial fly was allowed, so I was debarred the satisfaction of luring pound trout to their death by means of the humble worm.

My want of success would not have "needled" me so much had others, who also had the privilege of fishing, been equally unsuccessful; but this was not the case. Although the water was kept very select, I, at times, met others upon it, and, in one or two cases, the easy manner in which they managed to successfully negotiate the capture of those fish it was only my privilege to gaze upon with longing eyes and inward conviction of never-ending non-success, fairly maddened

me. My applications for information and instruction, made humbly to these successful anglers, were generally received with a pitiful shrug of the shoulders, sometimes by the gift of a fly, and occasionally with a few really useful hints. But I soon became convinced that if I ever acquired the art of fly-fishing for trout it would not be through their kindness or consideration of the woes of a beginner, and the hunger he has for instruction.

Books I devoured eagerly ; but their assistance was limited : a book upon trout fishing is of use *after* you have gained the knowledge of how to cast a fly decently, etc., but the one has yet to be written from which a *bona fide* beginner can gain the knowledge necessary in the preliminary stages. I consulted with boon companions, and tried to learn something from their conversation, but for the most part they were wrapped up in recounting their own exploits : they either could not or would not explain to me "how to do it." In this connection I would remark that I was not *quite* a duffer, but such skill as I possessed was not sufficient for the purpose I had in view, and it was a matter of important consideration with me how I was to acquire that coveted preliminary knowledge of the never-completed art of fly-fishing for wary trout. But all this was shortly to be altered. In the course of a conversation I had with a bosom friend of mine, who knew no more about fishing than does a garden rake, but was otherwise anything but "dull," I detailed to him my difficulties, and he struck a very happy idea.

"That bit of water you fish," said he, "is one

of the best in the South of England, you say. Now plenty of really good fishermen would avail themselves of the offer of a day or so's fishing on it. And wouldn't they in return show you a few wrinkles?"

It did not take me long to arrive at the conclusion that this was not only possible, but very probable; and having satisfied myself upon this point, I determined that I would approach some master in the gentle art, and trust to the enjoyment he got out of the day's fishing inducing him to take pity upon me. The owner of the water was communicated with and the necessary permission for myself and a friend obtained. Armed with this document, I wrote to one who, at that time, held a position of prominence in the angling world and who has since become more and more popular each year as a right good sportsman and successful angler. In my letter I explained just how matters stood, and as I had determined to leave no stone unturned that would be likely to assist me in gaining a knowledge of the art, I further requested him to provide me with an outfit that he could recommend, "as I fancied the one I had was not just the thing for the purpose."

It was a bold stroke, and I awaited with some eagerness the reply to my communication. At that time I little knew the kindly consideration the angler I had approached had for every amateur; and so I was agreeably surprised when I received a letter informing me he would be very pleased to join me for a day and that he would bring down a rod, etc., that would doubtless suit me. This was the letter I alluded to in the opening of this

article, and it helped me to make a good breakfast! The instant I read it, I felt assured that at last I should meet an angler who *would* show me "how to do it." There was a genuine ring about it; and I may add here that I have had cause since to know that in this estimation of my new friend, I was not mistaken. I date from the receipt of that letter my success in fly-fishing for trout, and I would further assert that very few fishermen would trouble with an amateur as he has done with scores; for I am not the only one who has to thank him for many useful lessons and thoroughly enjoyable days "on the war-path."

The arrangements for time and place of meeting were made, and a delightful June morning found me at the little local station adjacent to the water we were to fish. My train arrived a few minutes after his, and I caught a glimpse of him awaiting my arrival. As soon as the train had cleared away from the platform on its journey to London I crossed the line.

"Mr. Shrubsole?"

"Yes. Mr. Marston?"

"Yes."

And the next instant I warmly wrung the hand of the Editor of the *Fishing Gazette* for the first time.

In one of his delightful gossips about angling, the "Amateur Angler" thus speaks of Mr. Marston ("Piscator Major," as he happily styles him): "I may here say that I never go a-fishing without the Major. I try his wonderful patience a great deal. When I am dry-fly fishing, I have a way of swishing off my flies in trying to dry

them, to say nothing of constantly getting caught in the opposite bank, or in a tree ; or else I leave my flies a mile or two behind me, stuck fast in thistle or grass, whilst I have steadily fished on, unconscious of my loss. The Major always comes to my aid, and puts me right for a fresh start ; in fact, I could never fish at all, but for his ever-ready help at hand."

This is certainly my experience ; and I am sure I never can sufficiently thank him for his " wonderful patience " and " ever-ready help," not only upon my first day with him, but upon many subsequent occasions also.

We left the pretty little railway station and made our way towards the water, chatting as we went. Arrived at the spot where we intended to start our day's sport, my companion soon had " my " rod put together, and a little beauty it proved to be. I have since killed many trout with it, and it is still brought into requisition at times, and has a place of honour in the room in which I pen this article. The winch, line, cast, and a fly were attached ; and then my friend remarked, " I think it will do ; shall I christen it for you ? "

I nodded, and in a few seconds about fifteen yards of line shot straight as a gun barrel in the direction of a rising fish. As soon as the fly got within feeding distance there was a quiet movement on the part of the trout, just a perceptible response from the angler ; and turning round with the quiet but well-satisfied smile I now know so well, he remarked—

" He's there ; take hold ! "

I accepted the rod from his hand, and with a

quickly palpitating heart, played and ultimately landed a pound fish.

"Well done!" exclaimed my companion, "very well done; you must not call yourself a duffer after that!"

And the hearty tone of his congratulations half convinced me that I *had really caught that fish myself.*

I do not propose to tire my reader by detailing the many hints and the kindly advice I received from Mr. Marston that day. Sufficient it is for me to say that he soon put me into the "way to do it;" quietly corrected my erratic casting, and showed me "how not to do it," and that I had ample opportunity of watching "how he did it." When the evening came I joyfully realised that at last I had a chance of becoming a fly-fisherman.

Not till he had seen me fitted out did my companion start to put his own rod together, and then we strolled by the side of the river some distance, he on the way picking out a trout or two which he returned to the water, tutoring me the while. I was not so selfish as to wish to occupy the whole of his time and spoil his day; so at my urgent request he went to a part of the river that I knew held big fish and plenty of them (had I not looked at and longed for them many a time?) and I started seriously to work with a better heart and more hope of success than had hitherto possessed me.

This was not only my first day with Mr. Marston, but also my introduction to the remarkable killing powers of the Yellow Dun. It was the Yellow that the fish I played succumbed to,

and I still had it attached to the end of my cast ; I also had a few spare ones that had been handed to me with the characteristic smile of my friend, and the quiet remark : " Perhaps you will want them ! "

Presently I noticed a fish rise just outside an overhanging bush, and with the confidence of a veteran I proceeded to work out the necessary length of line and cast my fly in the desired direction. The Yellow Dun alighted with the gentleness of a flake of snow—on the bush ! Instead of losing my temper and tugging fiercely at the fly, I adopted the advice of my new friend and *very gently* whisked it free. It fell softly upon the water, and in a tick was seized by a trout, who, before I had time to realise the fact, had *hooked himself*, and with a rush gone into a bed of weed. I lost my head, tugged hard at the line, and lost my fish.

My friend had told me to " take it quietly " if I lost a fish ; in fact, " never to get flurried." Very good advice, but very difficult to follow under these circumstances ! However, I sufficiently controlled my feelings, and with a sigh of resignation, proceeded to repair my dilapidated cast and attach another Yellow from my reserve stock.

I had not long to wait before another of the rising fish I had been particularly instructed to " spot " showed upon the scene. Very carefully this time did I approach my quarry. This part of the river was rather open, and I had to " lay low " for fear of disturbing the trout. To my delight, I managed to work out the right length of line quite to my own satisfaction, and then,

bracing myself for the effort, I made the cast—or rather, half of it. The second half did not “come off,” for the fly had firmly embedded itself in a “horse daisy” behind me! I am afraid the expression I made use of is not generally heard in a drawing-room—more frequently probably it proceeds from a sufferer from the gout—but it came with emphasis from me then! I resumed an upright position, scared all the trout in the river for a hundred yards, disengaged my fly from the daisy, and resumed my journey upstream, whistling a stave of—

“ If you don't at first succeed, try, try, try again.”

In the distance I saw my friend's rod bending to the fruitless efforts of a big fish to escape. I saw him stoop down, and knew that fish was in the net, and fired with fresh enthusiasm I once more watched the surface of the stream for the tell-tale rings.

In an open piece of water at the tail of a rather strong stream a fish rose, and after a few preliminary preparations I made a cast over him. It was not a successful cast, in fact it was a “wrong un;” the line fell in coils upon the water, but I noticed that the gut extended itself decently, and the fly came floating down with the stream. Now, my friend had told me when a fly was coming down like that to let well alone; so I let it float. Not so the trout. He came at it with a rush, and I struck, and could not help shouting loudly, “I've got him!” although at that very minute I had by no means made sure of my capture. In the end, though, I proved too much for his troutship, and when he lay gasping on

the bank my cup of happiness was brimming over.

And so I went on, scaring a fish here, hooking and losing one there ; still, by midday I had something to look at, and when I overtook my friend, who was lying upon a bank enjoying a pipe, in answer to his inquiry : " How have you got on ? " I turned out my creel—four fish, from three-quarters of a pound to a pound each, and eyed my catch proudly.

" What have you done ? " I queried,

" Oh, I've caught a few," he answered, the while he shut one eye and looked comically at me out of the other—another little way he has, by-the-by—and turning out his creel he exposed to my astonished gaze four brace of trout, every fish evidently being well over a pound, and three weighing at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each.

" I have had to turn back a rare lot of half-pounders," he remarked. " Where *are* the big fish ? "

But the merry twinkle in his eye betrayed the fact that he was satisfied with his sport so far. He had been using the Yellow Dun ; and I may here remark that we used no other fly throughout the day. The day was very hot in the mid-part, and being bright as well, we gave the fish a rest, and lolled on the bank, chatting over matters appertaining to fly-fishing. We also discussed a very fine and large veal and ham pie. My companion took a great fancy to the pie in fact, and upon subsequent occasions he has had the coolness to assert that if it wasn't for the pie that usually accompanies me upon fishing excursions, he should stop away ! Be this as it may, I am

convinced of the vast importance of a properly-made pie; without it, I never consider a day's fishing perfect. The right place to eat a pie is by the water side. Who dares assert that a pie at home tastes as nice as it does when the river runs murmuringly by your feet, and the plash of a rising fish divides your attention?

We lit our pipes, and my companion showed and told me many wrinkles in connection with the art of dry-fly fishing. In the midst of our conversation a splendid trout started feeding, about 30yds. up the river. My friend soon had the Yellow over him, and a few minutes later a 1½lb. fish was added to our catch. At my suggestion, I walked by my friend's side and watched him as he neatly put his fly over the rising fish we met with in the next mile of the river. I should think that more than half-a-dozen fish, well over half-a-pound, were returned to the water during the next hour or so, and two of about 1½lb. each were retained. You may be sure I closely watched "how it was done;" and without doubt, that afternoon was a very instructive one to me. When we reached a part of the river that runs slow and deep, and is fearfully weedy—where the angler must fish very fine and far off to be successful—then did my companion prove himself a master hand. Then also did we find the big fish. In an hour's fishing at this part, Mr. Marston had two brace of trout, between 1½lb. and 1½lb.; and they had to be *fished* for! When hooked—and this had to be done at from 15yds. to 20yds. distance—the way they bolted into the weeds was a caution. But the angler knew what he was up to, and being handled as they should be, all their

efforts availed them nothing. At the present time I can remember no better fishing than I saw that afternoon and evening.

So far my companion had seven and a-half brace of fish ; the evening was drawing near, and so we put our rods at rest, and retraced our steps. Much as I had seen and learned that day, the "staggerer" was yet to come ! Arrived at a very fine pool, we noticed several good fish rising in one particular part of it. I knew the spot well, and knew it was deep there. Mr. Marston wanted me to have a cast over them, but I preferred to watch him. Quietly he waded out through the shallow water, and put the Yellow over the rising fish, and then occurred one of the finest exhibitions of fly-fishing it has ever been my lot to behold, and one of the best bits of sport I can remember. My readers must not forget that my companion had a very fine cast on, and that the evening was far advanced.

Very softly the Yellow alighted upon the surface of that part of the pool—only about 12ft. square, in which the fish were feeding. Instantly it was seized by a trout ; the angler as quickly tightened upon the fish, and by exerting a judicious pressure, induced it to leave the deep hole, and make for the rapid stream below. There it was quickly killed, and then carefully drawn into the shallow part of the pool towards the angler, who, having discarded his landing net and refused my offer of the one I was carrying, stooped down, and with his hand removed Mr. Trout from his native element, and having released the hook threw a fine-conditioned fish, well over 1lb., upon the bank where I was standing.

It was a pretty bit of work, quickly done in a masterly manner; *and four times more was the process repeated!* It was quite dark when Mr. Marston waded ashore, and with a quiet smile asked me if I didn't think that little hole was full of fish?

"Right you are!" I replied; "*was*—you must have nearly emptied it, though!"

And certainly he must have done so. Just fancy four trout out of such a small pool, all well over a pound, and one nearly a pound and a-half; in addition also one fish, returned to the water, of about half-a-pound.

I can see him now as, with a steady cast, the fly was propelled over the fish, at least fifteen yards distant. Not one mistake. As cool as a cucumber was the angler, as fish after fish was risen, struck, played, and handled from the stream. The pool itself was right under the opposite bank, and hanging over it was a thorn bush! So the cast was none of the simplest, especially when dusk drew on. My friend pulled at his pipe, and blew a cloud like unto a Sheffield shaft, and that was the only sign he exhibited of what *must* have been stirring within him. As he turned to throw the fish towards me, however, I noticed each time the quiet smile and comical shutting of one eye, that so surely denotes his inward satisfaction.

I was to learn yet another lesson before that day was done. As we strolled down the side of the river I told my companion that I had always used a Coachman when it got dusk, and he—without denying the value of that fly for evening fishing—instructed me that when trout have fed through the day upon a certain fly, it is as well to use the

same pattern in the evening, sometimes perhaps a size or two larger. He practically proved the truth of this at a pool we shortly reached.

"Now, a good fish lies there for a certainty," he remarked. "See, I will make a cast. Great Scott ! It is a good one !"

I verily believe that was the only bit of uncontrolled excitement he exhibited that day. And it was excusable. The yellow was flicked carelessly out into the semi-darkness. I saw him tighten upon a magnificent fish, that ploughed the pool in a truly gallant manner, and after a prolonged fight was brought to the bank. *The* fish of the day. Mr. Marston told me afterwards it weighed just over 1½lb. It looked a good 2lb. fish then.

I must not forget to say that during the afternoon and evening I had occasionally a turn at the sport myself, and succeeded in catching a few half-pounders. It seemed impossible for me to "hook into" anything beyond that weight—*i.e.*, if we bar the bushes and rocks I frequently "caught."

The last pool we could fish that evening was reached, and here my companion insisted upon me having a turn ; this I did, and got a half-pounder, of course.

"There must be bigger fish there," remarked my friend ; "have another try."

This time I felt something more like the pull and plunge of the one or two decent fish I had caught earlier in the day, and in the result I managed to net a nice pound fish.

"There is a bigger one than *that* in the pool," said my friend.

I told him to have a cast over it, and he did so. Presently—

“I told you so.”

And the bowing of his little rod told a tale that could not be mistaken.

That was the last fish of the day, and it scaled $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. We left the river with regret, and at the little railway station I bade adieu to my newly-formed friend. I was awfully sorry to part with him ; the day had been all too short ; but everything must come to an end. Of course, we made arrangements to meet again, and the last words Piscator Major whispered to me just before the train started were :

“Shrubsole, it has been a delightful day, and that pie was one of the best I ever tasted ! Don't forget to bring another when next we are on the war-path !”

You may be sure I did not !

Mr. Marston's catch that day was ten and a half brace of trout, from 1 lb. to $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb ; mine, two and a half brace from $\frac{1}{2}$ lb to 1 lb., *but I went home with most fish.*

* * * * *

Years have rolled by, many a day have I spent with the Editor of the *Fishing Gazette* by the river side ; many a pie we have disposed of between us. Perseverance and continual practice have made—well, a decent fly-fisherman of me. Even now I must acknowledge the superior skill of the master who first *really* showed me “how to do it,” but now I can manage to get a fly somewhere near a fish, near enough at any rate to account for one or two occasionally.

You may depend upon it I ordered the funeral

of several pound-and-a-half fish when last summer I received permission to cast my flies in one of the finest trout waters in this (or any other) country.

Arrived at the lower part of this delightful trouting paradise, I soon got into my waders and mounting a Yellow Dun—Yes! you may laugh at Shrubsole's Yellow Dun, but it wants a lot of beating!—began "stalking my prey." The river was low and very bright, but presently I noticed a rise just in front of me. I sent the Yellow on a journey of inspection. There was a boil, the gleam of a golden side, a terribly amateurish strike on my part, a line floating limp and fishless in the gentle breeze, and a quotation from me! I had broken in my first fish, and it was no satisfaction to me when I saw a thumping big trout scud away up-stream, showing a tail above the surface as big as an anchor fluke!

I rigged up another cast and went a little farther on. A lump about as big as a Dutch cheese arose in my throat as I noticed another fine fish feeding a few yards away. I sent the Yellow on a little journey connected with the funeral of that fish—which did not come off, for he would not take the Yellow on at any price. I tried other flies over him, but not caring to waste too much time, soon left him "for another day," and directed my attention to a brace feeding just on the edge of a "glassy glade" a little farther on. Down came the Yellow just in front of the nose of No. 1. He saw it and went for it; but oh! lor! the same thing happened as at first, and I sat down to rig up my third cast, with somewhat mixed feelings.

I soon found another fish to operate upon, and as the Yellow sailed to him he sucked it down. Oh! so nicely! This time *I merely tightened up*, and that fish did a delightful dance to the music of my reel. His funeral came off and he made a pound-and-a-half corpse.

In an hour-and-a-half's fishing I had two others of about the same weight, besides turning back two of about a pound—for I could plainly see it had no need to creel anything much less than a pound-and-a-half. I spotted one fish, a regular "whopper," feeding in the tail of a run. My fly came down, and, as I fancied, passed him. I saw him show his side as he took *something* and was just recovering my line preparatory to making another cast, when I found he had hooked himself! Oh! yes, it was him right enough, and a tough fight he made of it. Twice I had him close to the net, and each time he shook his head, bolted, and made another gallant fight for liberty. Well, *his* funeral came off, and *he* made a two-pound corpse. It is usual to pass the flask at the funeral—of trout. I did so! But being alone I passed it to myself.

And then I came to a deep hole—and went in it! After I had emptied the water out of my waders, I made another start, and the Yellow proved too much for another brace, one 1½ lb., one 1¾ lb., during the next hour. After this it turned terrifically hot, and I gave up fishing, had some pie, and lolled upon the bank watching the light cirrus clouds far away in the blue vault above me.

This was very enjoyable until I found I was lolling too near an ants' nest, and the little beasts

were simply covering me. So I sprung erect (copyright !) and strolled up the river, spotting good places as I went. I left my fish at a little cottage close by, for they rather cut my shoulder, and moreover the hot sun was drying them. The civil owner of the cottage gave me several valuable hints of which I availed myself later on ; and then I strolled on.

I passed one pool where I *counted* seven trout, not one of which would weigh less than a pound-and-a-quarter, and the biggest fellow would scale 2lbs. My fingers did not itch to get at them—oh, no ! I marked *that* pool down.

Then I came to a magnificent pool, with, at its head, one of the prettiest cascades I have seen. While I stood admiring this perfect trout-pool and its surroundings, a fine trout threw itself clean out of the water, and at the same time I noticed two unmistakable rings at different places. I couldn't stand that ; could you ? I reckon the man who could, would stand anything ! So I set to work, but not a fin did I get, although I tried many a fly, and several fish showed while I was fishing. I inwardly resolved to give the pool a trial in the evening, and being convinced it was too bright for fishing then, continued my stroll.

The afternoon wore on, and it came over a bit cloudy. I picked out three good fish before dusk, and then I reached the pool with the cascade at its head, mentioned above.

Gentle reader, do *you* know what it is to have a rod in your hand properly balanced with a *suitable* line, so that even in the semi-darkness, although you cannot *see* where your fly alights,

you *know* and can *feel* exactly how much line you have out, and *where your fly is*?

When I reached the pool, the genial proprietor of the water, who had walked up to meet me, was there, and after a hearty greeting, he told me to get to work. Wading carefully out, I got a good swing on my line, and sent the fly right under the cascade. I felt a tug—didn't I just?—and it took me quite ten minutes to bring that plucky trout to my net, although I had fastened a slightly stouter cast to my line. He was a takeable fish, even at my increased standard.

For an hour I stuck in that pool, and succeeded in getting three more fish—one a beauty of over 2lbs.—and then I gave it up, and the proprietor and myself strolled down-stream, smoking our pipes, and chatting as we went. When I told him I had turned back several 1lb. fish, he politely said, "more fool you!" Still I was satisfied, you may be sure. When we reached the pool where I had seen the seven trout in the mid-day, I could not resist the temptation of having a trial shot. Standing in the meadow below the pool, I worked out the necessary length of line, and sent the fly on a voyage of discovery.

Shade of Walton! I thought at first I had hung up, but a tremendous rush of the fish soon convinced me I had not. And then commenced one of the most exciting struggles with a trout I have ever experienced. I got down into the water to have a better command of the fish, and, of course, went in over my waders! It's a mercy I did not lose the fish in gaining a foot-hold. I didn't. How he bored and plunged about the pool! Once

my line slackened, and I was terribly afraid I had lost him; but carefully winching in my line I found he had only bolted towards me, and as soon as he again felt the strain, away he went, and my winch sang a sweet song to me. At length the end came; his struggles grew fainter, and although I could not see him, I knew he was giving in. My friend handed me the net. I put all the strain on I dared. The 10ft. 6in. of built cane proved master, and I netted—a pound fish, hooked foul in the fleshy part of the tail!

Well, it was a disappointment, but I put up with it, because there was nothing else left for me to do. I kept that pound trout; it was the smallest fish I took away that day.

It was now quite dark, and so we adjourned to the little cottage, where I placed the latter part of the day's catch with those I had taken previously. It was a very pretty show—seven brace of trout, weighing at least 20lbs.

I believe Piscator Major would have been proud of those trout.

"You have come a long way for a day's fishing," said my friend the proprietor. "You can stay and fish to-morrow if you like."

Did I stay? Rather.

* * * *

The morning of my third delightful day broke warm and cloudy; need I say more? Throughout the day the sun occasionally peeped forth, but it was a perfect trouting day taken all round.

I *kept* ten-and-a-half brace of trout that day—the same number as Mr. Marston had upon the first occasion I met him. But I had not a fish under 1½lb. full, and my biggest was over 2½lbs.

Altogether in the two days, I had about 50lbs. weight of trout, besides turning back many really takeable fish.

And I shall fish that water again next summer. Will you come with me ?

Who says "Yes !" for another three delightful days ?

A LAST DAY AMONG THE PIKE.

"'Tis ideal pike-fishing weather." The remark came from my friend P——. We were bound for a famous pike pool. A window of the compartment was down, and as the fresh frosty air fanned our faces, and our gaze was directed towards the horizon, where the sun—a mass of gold—was fast vanishing in its glorious setting of red, and the deep purple shadows were chasing each other over meadow and hill, pleasant memories of big baskets in the past arose in our minds, and we eagerly anticipated the end of our journey that evening, and the fortunes of the morrow.

It is characteristic of your *bona-fide* angler that he always anticipates with keen enthusiasm a day at his favourite sport. The genuine sportsman is never down-hearted at the recollection of past blank days. I doubt if often he calls them to mind. Rather, his memory clings to those red-letter days when his catches made a proud angler of him indeed. It is only with assumed indifference that at such times he receives the congratulations of his friends. While he coolly puffs his pipe, and listens to the praise lavished upon his catch, in his heart of heart he rejoices in the hook-

ing, playing, and landing of his best fish. Once more he sees the flash of the silver side far down in the weedy depths as the steel is driven home and the hooked fish makes its first plunge for life and liberty. He can even feel the electric thrill that searches every part of the body as, through the rings of the bending rod, the line travels, while the big pike, with an angry shake of its head and a powerful movement of its tail and fins, shoots through the water with the speed of a frightened deer. No such thing as stopping *that* fish! It is an impossibility to "skull-drag" *that* specimen of *Esox Lucius*! Only after repeated plunges of the pike, again and again frustrated by the skilful and steady strain exerted by the angler, is the quarry tired out, led to the gaff, and smartly hauled into the punt—a well conditioned fish of some 15lbs. weight, whose beautifully mottled sides and comely shape are a picture to stir the enthusiasm of the lucky captor, and entirely blot from the memory the non-success of previous efforts with spinning bait or paternoster.

I have said that your true angler seldom calls to mind blank days, and that he always anticipates success on the day upon which he is about to enter. I will go further. I will say that no sport generates the enthusiasm in young and old alike, in the beginner equally as in the adept, that is stirred by angling. The last fish the aged fisherman lands quickens the pulsation of his heart and sends the blood coursing through his veins, even as that first fish he landed sixty summers ago. Who that is fond of pike-fishing has not spun for those fish when the line has frozen in the rod

rings ; and has not felt the delicious warm glow suddenly possess the system when the repeated rush and steady strain on the line told that a big fish had struck the bait ? The angler, who but a few seconds ago had a difficulty in "keeping himself warm," now finds he has all his work cut out for him in keeping cool ; and his companion, eagerly awaiting the moment when the gaff can be successfully brought into play, forgets that there are seven or eight degrees of frost. For all those two are concerned it might well be high summer. Enthusiasm indeed ! Can any enthusiasm equal that of the ardent angler ?

Such considerations filled my mind (and, I do not doubt, the mind of P—— also) as the train rushed across Blankshire. We had every reason to anticipate good sport on the morrow, for the water we were to fish was well stocked with pike and perch, and was strictly preserved. We had made arrangements for an ample supply of live baits, and all our tackle had been overhauled. We were fit for the fray, and eager for it ; as well we might be, for was not this the last day of the season among the pike ? True, another month would have to pass by before the legal limit was reached ; but neither P—— nor myself believes in the advisability of fishing for perch and pike so late in the season as March 15th. Indeed, we should not have been on pike-fishing bent in February had not the prolonged frost prevented operations in the two months previously. And we did *so* want to try our hands once during the season on this special sheet of water—the scene of many past successes.

As to its being "ideal pike-fishing weather"—

that was another matter. I wanted to kill some fish, and I have noticed that my best days have occurred when the weather has been anything but ideal, so-called.

As we lean back in our corners, I tell P—— so, and glean from him that his experience is much the same.

We illustrate this from some of our past adventures, the while the smoke from our pipes curls upward—for we are both ardent devotees of

Sublime tobacco, which from East to West
Cheers the tar's labour or the Turkman's rest!

I recount to my friend two experiences—rather out-of-the-way, inasmuch as they happened on extra-extraordinary days. Some four or five seasons back I accompanied a friend to a superb sheet of water well stocked with big pike and perch. From the punt we could (and did) command all the best spots on the lake. We had a grand lot of live dace, and, without being egotistical, I may say that skill was not wanting. The weather was “ideal pike-fishing weather.” Everything, in fact, was in our favour—everything, I should say, *but the fish!* We spun, we live-baited, we paternostered: all to no purpose. Throughout the whole day we had not a single run; nor did we see the slightest sign of a fish moving in any part of the lake. In the evening the proprietor of the water came down to see how we had got on, and for some little time he absolutely refused to believe us when we stated the truth—that we had not caught, had not even “run” one fish! He was good enough to invite us to stay with him

overnight, and have another trial next day ; and this we decided to do. Well (to make a long story as short as possible), the following morning we started afresh, and this time under anything but favourable conditions. We had used up the best of our bait on the previous day, and, as no more were obtainable, had to content ourselves with such as were left. To cap it all, it was not "ideal" weather—that is to say, not the orthodox "ideal" weather. Mr. Mantalini would have termed it a "demn'd moist unpleasant day ;" for a searching mist drove right across the lake, and everything was soon drenched. Jupiter ! How those fish fed that day ! Frequently my friend and I had on a fish simultaneously—it was a case of bait, cast, hook, play, and bring to the gaff, without cessation until about three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the mist cleared away, and was replaced by some "ideal pike-fishing weather." Then *we got no more fish !* We turned back many small fish that day, and the fish which we retained numbered eleven, varying in weight from 4lbs. to 9lbs. Now (in view of this) what constitutes "ideal" weather for pike-fishing ? Mist ! One might be excused for asserting it. But it doesn't ; for my friend P—— next tells of a day on which the pike were running freely until a mist came on and stopped all sport !

And then I tell of my other rather curious experience.

Who does not prefer a wind to ruffle the surface of the water when pike-fishing ? Is it not one of the principal items in "ideal" weather ? Yet I remember fishing a pool for

three-quarters of a day, during which the weather and water were all that could be wished. Well, I got one fish—a $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. perch—that took a dace nearly as large as itself. I wonder that the dace did not “go for” the perch for having the impudence to attack him. At the end of the day the wind fell, and the surface of the lake was like unto a sheet of glass. Yet, in less than two hours, live-baiting, with the bait about 2ft. 6in. below the surface, I killed four fish of from 5lbs. to 8lbs., and returned three smaller ones. And this when the action of the bait caused the float to produce a series of receding rings that (one felt sure) would drive any decent pike clean away.

Then P—— and I leave the realms of truth, and wade far and fearlessly into the pleasant depths of mendacity. It's his fault entirely. He starts a tale of an impossible day's pike-fishing, and, as I never care to be beaten when fish stories are started, I follow suit with an equally impossible adventure. Ultimately, we arrive at our journey's end; and very soon we are snugly ensconced in the cosy smoke-room of the village inn, where we spend a comfortable hour or two chatting with the local magnates. Then off to bed, where between “sheets scented with lavender” we lie dreaming of enormous pike and perch, until Boots awakens us in the morning with the information that it is “time to get up,” and that our baits have arrived in magnificent condition, not one having “turned up” during the journey—the latter being by far the more acceptable of the two items of information. If there is one thing I hate about winter pike-fishing, it is the nuisance of having to get up in

the middle of the night, as it were! After a hearty breakfast, we enter the trap that is to take us to our destination—which is a few miles out of the village—and an enjoyable drive by pleasant farm-houses and quiet country churches starts the day fairly successfully.

“Ideal pike-fishing weather!” I should just think it was! It could not have been more perfect. The sun could be viewed through the frosty atmosphere without dazzling one’s eyes; the hedges and leafless trees were covered with a white mantle of frost; and the iron-shod hoofs of our horse rang out in the clear, quiet, morning air, as we bowled along the frost-bound highway. Orthodox “ideal weather.” But would it have the desired effect on our sport to-day? Probably it would, if the water were right. Ah! that *if*! What a lot depends upon that little word!

Not that I am one of those anglers who start grumbling at the wind, weather, or water, if sport should prove to be indifferent. I may say at once that I thoroughly enjoyed my last day of the season among the pike, although it *did* begin to rain in the middle of the day, and continued raining until the shades of evening compelled us to “give over;” although the water that *should* have been of a beautiful green tint was more like “pea-soup;” although, instead of groaning under the weight of our spoil at the close of the day, we groaned at its absence. I repeat I do not, will not, grumble at the want of success. What I do say, however, is this: that the fact that an angler can stay in an open punt on a lake the whole day through, catch three small pike, just and only just takeable, and get wet through when he could be

at home, seated before a comfortable fire, with a cigar and a book for his silent companions, is another proof of his earnestness! My friend P—— “reckoned that we were idiots.” I did not admit his theory. While wringing the wet from my soft cloth cap and long overcoat, after vainly trying to find a dry cigar, some tobacco that was not swamped, or a match that would light, I remarked, “it is another example of the sporting enthusiasm of fishermen.” P—— muttered something about “sporting rot,” and “enthusiasm be hanged,” emptied the water from the pockets of his overcoat, and adjusting a frest bait on his tackle, proceeded to spin over a very likely spot—thus proving my theory to be correct! But I am anticipating.

When we arrived at the lake we found the water, as I have already stated, “as thick as pea-soup;” and our faces lengthened as our spirits fell at our blighted prospects. However, “faint heart never won fair lady.” We put our tackles together, got into the punt, and proceeded to fish carefully round the sides of the lake, with the result that I ran two fish, and P—— ran one, all of which were under 4lbs. and had to be returned to the water. Then in some deep water I managed to “nobble” a sizeable fish, which was quickly followed by two others. Then down came the rain, and our sport ceased for the day. After it had been raining a few hours, and while I was paternostering a very deep hole, I ran a fish which immediately showed fight with pluck and perseverance; however, a steady strain soon told its tale, and presently there rolled over on the top of the water a magnificent perch of quite

3lbs. I say quite 3 lbs. ; and I believe it. I have no proof of the weight of the fish, however, for he not only "rolled over," but he also rolled off! My rod sprang back, and my line hung limp and fishless! P—— and myself heaved heavy sighs. Had we landed that perch, we should most certainly have had a specimen. As it was, three fish of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. each made up our basket on our last day among the pike.

When one goes a journey of many miles for a day's fishing, and returns from the lake comparatively fishless, can one possibly do better than embody his thoughts during the railway journey in an article—if article he has to write? I think not ; and that is why so much reminiscence and reflection are found in this paper, while the record of the day's fishing is crowded into the last paragraph.

A TROUTING REVERIE.

We are seated in the quiet calm of a quaintly and cosily-furnished snuggerly, in the comfortable chambers of an angling chum. The din of the city without fails to reach us; and the surroundings within assist memory in picturing, most pleasantly, scenes of the past. Then one says, "where do you propose to fish this Easter?"

The query opens the flood-gates of memory. While the rest of the party discuss the matter, I tilt back my chair, and, with my gaze fixed upon a stuffed specimen of *Salmo fatio*, that in life weighed $4\frac{1}{4}$ lbs., killed by our host in a dangerous pool by means of a ten-foot rod, gossamer line, and tiny-winged dun, am in a reverie, and the memories of past Easter angling holidays rush upon me.

Prominent among my Easter reminiscences is a day on a south country stream, when the trout rose madly at the March Brown, and the strap of my creel cut my shoulder by midday. That was a day! The stream was running bank-full, but perfectly clear; the wind was up-stream the greater portion of the water I had to fish, and

"across and up" the remainder ; the atmosphere was close and "moist ;" the March Browns were hatching out in myriads, and the trout revelling in the repast. Such March Browns ! None of your poor miserable, half-starved, spindely specimens that seemed ashamed at putting in an appearance ; but fine, fat, luscious-looking March Browns nearly as big as May-flies, food that would tempt your epicurean trout. The fish fully appreciated the meal provided for them. Here was no rushing about or playful splashing. They rose steadily, and meant business, and as the flies floated towards them—they were not allowed to float far !—the surface of the stream was just broken, and the fish quietly sucked in the winged tit-bits. It was a sight fit for "none but anglers and honest men." I have never seen such a rise of March Browns. When I reached the water in the early morning, the old keeper—he is dead since—said to me, "You'll have a full creel to-day, sir, or I'm a rum 'un !" And I did ! All through the day the fish rose—of course, more freely at times than at others—and fishing up-stream with a floating fly I landed thirteen brace and a half of trout, and returned as well seven brace of ill-conditioned fish. This is no mendacious statement ; it is a positive fact.

Compare another Easter experience. Then I fished the whole day through—and a bitterly cold day it was—and caught one fish only. That day I did not see a single fly of any description hatch out, although wind, weather, and water were fairly favourable. I remained over night, and on the following day, on the same water,

fished up to midday without killing a fish. Then it started to snow. I was prepared to "tackle up" when the fish commenced to rise in every direction. As there was no fly hatching out, the only conclusion I could arrive at was that they were rising at the falling flakes! This rise continued for an hour, in which I killed seven fish with a rather large light-yellow dun. Then the rise ceased; the snow came down thicker and faster; the whole country round became covered with snow, and I thought it better to give over. So I departed, not at all dissatisfied with my hour's sport.

Next flit through my mind pleasant recollections of Easters long past. Well do I remember a rough day on the Ogwen, when the wee Welsh trout rose greedily at the small hackle flies, as I pursued my way up the lovely valley of Nant Ffrancon, the majestic mountains on either side, their proud peaks tipped with white, clearly outlined against the cloudless sky of blue. Do I not remember the big trout—big for the Ogwen—hooked under the Ben Log Falls, that fought pluckily, and almost successfully, for life and liberty? When he was placed in my basket, how the small trout already there appeared to be yet smaller—absurdly small—compared with his proud proportions! The following day, after a few preliminary casts on the stream from Llyn Idwal, I fished Llyn Ogwen. It was a gusty day, and, casting my flies on the edge of the ruffled parts of the lake, I picked up several decent fish: for the most part with that popular Welsh fly—the Coch-y-Bondhu.

Yet farther back in the realms of recollection,

back in boyhood's days when the skill, which comes of long practice, was an unknown quantity to me, and the trout caught principally succumbed to the "Gardenia" fly, otherwise the humble worm ! I can plainly picture the rippling stream, in the heart of the Kentish hills, from which I have ruthlessly hauled (irrespective of size or condition) the trout that were foolish enough or hungry enough—it matters little which—to seize the freshly dug worms so unskilfully presented to them ! How proud I used to be of the few troutlings I succeeded in catching, and how my young heart thumped beneath my clothing when a fish of large proportions seized the worm, and refused to be "hauled" out : the inevitable result being a smash ! Easter was the earliest date upon which the friendly farmer would allow me to fish my boyhood's angling *El Dorado*, and in those days there was no question, "where shall I fish this Easter ?" My destination was bound to be the stream in the heart of the Kentish hills. Years afterwards, when the artificial fly had replaced the "Gardenia," I spent an Easter on the banks of this stream, so surrounded with delightful reminiscences, and killed with the winged lure some descendants of those trout which were *not* ruthlessly slaughtered by me in boyhood's days.

'Twas at Easter I hooked that large trout in a favourite pool on a river I have fished for many years with varying success. Throughout the day I had had indifferent sport ; but late in the afternoon I noticed a fish rising in this particular pet pool. He undoubtedly meant business, and I sent the fly about two yards above him. It alighted "soft as thistle down," and floated to-

wards him in such manner that I could not help thinking: "If he will not take that he'll not take anything." Before it reached the spot at which I had noticed him feeding there was a rush. I struck, and was instantaneously playing what proved to be a very awkward customer indeed. For quite a quarter of an hour I had that fish on before I could get even a look at him. He plunged about the pool like a mad thing, and what puzzled me very considerably was that I could not fetch him near to the surface the whole time. Ultimately he made a dash down stream, and then I saw, as the fish sullenly swam through the shallow water at my feet, that I had hooked in the dorsal fin a trout of considerably over two pounds weight. I saw something else! As he scudded across the shallow the hook drew clean out and my quarry was free! A week after this occurrence I had another day's fishing on the same stretch of water. As soon as I arrived I started for this particular pool, passing on my way many good spots, much to the surprise of the keeper whom I met on the way. I explained to him, however, that I was "going for" that big fish, and he asked, did I mean the big fish in the pool below the lake? because, if I did, I was too late: the Squire had landed it two days ago! "What was its weight?" I ask; and the reply comes, "Three pounds and a quarter exactly!"

Yet another recollection of a good fish at Easter is brought to mind. This time I was accompanied by the young son of a friend. The lad is a "born angler," and when we reach the river-side I fit him up with a rod and line, a cast of moderate strength, and attach thereto a large

March Brown. With this he is delighted, and starts to fish some rough water. I then proceed to put my own rod together, and, while attaching a fly to my delicate cast, notice a good fish feeding immediately below the cascade in front of me. To "work out" the length of line necessary to reach it, and to make the first cast over the spot at which it rose is but the work of a few seconds; but although the fish is feeding on *something*, it evidently has no *penchant* for the particular fly I have put over it. I try a change, and yet another, but it is no use. I exert the utmost skill I have; I try dry-fly and wet-fly, large and small. I cast over the spot the most natural imitation of the flies that appear on the river, and I present to the notice of his troutship some very attractive fancy flies. I try my hardest to induce the fish to "hang on." My efforts are fruitless. Ultimately, with a sigh of regret, I give up all hope of landing the big 'un—for that "big 'un" he is conclusively proved, as every now and then he rolls when feeding on that "something" it is beyond me to discover. As I leave the spot the lad, who has been watching my later efforts to catch the fish, asks, "may I try him?" I tell him he may, and pass to the next pool. I have just "spotted" another rising fish, and am prepared to cast over it, when I hear a yell, "I've got him, I've got him!" and, looking back, see that the lad is fast in a good fish. Little mercy and no line is he giving it; and it is lucky the cast is strong. Returning, I have the pleasure of coaching the lad, and then I net for him a handsome trout of 2½lbs. Undoubtedly it was the same fish I had tried my utmost to lure,

had exerted all my skill to catch, that had greedily taken the large fly that had been smacked at him by my friend's son.

"How quiet you are!" says one, turning to me. "Where do you propose to fish this Easter?" The query comes from our host, and involuntarily I exclaim, "I would it were possible to fish all past Easter angling holidays over again!"

AN ANGLING INCIDENT FORETOLD.

Does the angler exist who cannot recall the circumstances that led up to, and the particulars of, his red-letter days? Our memories may fail us when ordinary days are concerned; but the details of our big catches are easily brought to mind.

Other days that are vividly impressed upon our memory are those upon which we make ample preparations to visit an angler's paradise, journey there with all confidence, look forward with certainty to a big catch, and then draw—a blank.

Yet again there are other occasions upon which we have just an average catch, but something happens out-of-the-way, and for that reason the day is never forgotten. I have often thought that if some of these hitherto unexplainable "somethings" were ventilated through the medium of the angling press, some useful information would be forthcoming, and many puzzling matters would be easily explained.

It is with no hope, however, of the mystery contained in my present contribution being solved that I write this article. Probably, however, it

will interest my readers and set them thinking—as I have thought ; mayhap it will puzzle them—as it has puzzled me. There is something of an “uncanny” nature about it ; but there is no ghost. I can lay claim with Mary Ann Jenness, that “It’s no great of a story, but it’s true ; an’ arter all, that’s the main p’int in a story—ghost or no ghost.” In this connection I may remark that it is not even a story—simply an experience, and rather a strange experience, as I think my readers will admit.

A few years back—just as the month of June had put in an appearance—through the kindness of a friend I had the privilege of fishing about six miles of strictly preserved trout water. The permission extended over a week, and as at that time I had few opportunities of fishing *really* good water, I was jubilant, and hastened to make the necessary arrangements for my departure from the smoky town in which I then resided to the delightful demesne through which ran the water that contained, as my friend put it, “bushels of trout every yard of its course.” Next to a good week’s fishing, there is nothing so pleasant as the anticipation of it. As I put up my rod just to see that it was all right, and examined my fly-book to make sure flies and casts were there in plenty, in imagination I was already whipping the waters of this prolific stream.

Then a rather tedious railway journey, a hearty hand-shaking at a quiet little railway station, an enjoyable drive to our fishing quarters for the week—a grand old farm-house, with the fowls and ducks busily engaged round and about the approach to the neatly-kept little garden, full of

delicious, old-fashioned, sweet-smelling flowers—a cordial and respectful greeting on the part of the stalwart occupier of the front doorway, who was also to be our guide through the week; a kind motherly, ruddy-faced, prim, and cleanly-dressed woman, the wife of our stalwart steward, waiting to pour us out a cup of tea and help us to viands of various descriptions; a pipe, a chat, and a stroll down to the water-side.

It was a grand stream, and the water was coming down just right for the fly; several good trout were rising, and as we walked along the bank we disturbed scores of fish of various sizes. We followed the course of the stream for about a mile, our guide pointing out good spots here and there. Then we retraced our steps. As we strolled towards the farmhouse the steward remarked:

"It's all fair and easy fishing until you reach a gorge about three miles up the valley. It's rather risky wading there; in fact," and this with a quiet look at my slim form, and the stouter but shorter build of my friend, "if we get any threatening weather through the week I should advise you to leave the gorge alone."

This remark naturally brought the inquiry from us:

"Why?"

"Well, sir, you see our river floods very quickly, and up in the gorge upon one occasion I got caught, and before I could count three the water was on me. Knowing the bed of the stream as I do, and r-a-ther bigger as I am than either of you gents, I was glad to get back out of it. You see, sir, just above the gorge is a

wide part of the valley, and the water collects at the entrance, and as it rushes down through, it rises two or three feet as quick as that," with a snap of the fingers.

We agreed to guard against the danger, and soon after were ensconced between "sheets of lavender," sound asleep. I wish my readers to notice particularly that no information had been imparted to me about the fishing, and certainly no particulars or description of the river and its surroundings beyond the gorge, with the exception of the steward's casual remark :

"Just above the gorge is a wide part of the valley."

The next morning we were up early, and leaving a good mile-and-a-half of water to my friend, I started at a very pretty pool and soon began to fill my creel. I have no intention of describing that day's sport ; enough it is to say that I fished up within sight of the gorge, but by the time I arrived there had filled my creel ; and the afternoon being far advanced, as I had a pretty good walk to get to the farmhouse I reeled up and walked back, the proud possessor of seven or eight brace of good trout, inwardly resolved to give the gorge a trial on the morrow.

My friend had found a mile of the water quite sufficient to fill his creel, and so we agreed to each take the same stretch next day. As he put it, "I prefer the lower water ; it is *nearer home !*"

The morning was all that a fly-fisherman could wish, and when I reached the pool at which I had started on the previous day, I could not resist the temptation to try a cast over it. Result—a beau-

tifully conditioned fish of about $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. Then a little further on another temptation to stop, another fish, and so on, until by the time I reached the lower entrance to the gorge considerably more than half the day had gone. I had several fish in my creel, and sitting down on the bank I lit my pipe. I asked myself, "should I, or should I not, tackle the water I had been told was dangerous?"

By my side ran the stream, laughingly dashing against miniature boulders, or rippling over shallow pebbly pools; above me the blue vault of heaven, with scarcely a cloud to be seen; around me the quiet majesty of the heather-bedecked hills. Surely no danger was here? Certainly the gorge would look uninviting under different circumstances; the perpendicular sides—rather ragged at places—*would* be unpleasant companions to "rub shoulders with," *if the river were in flood*; but it wasn't.

I got up, and, *minus* my rod, etc., stepped into the water and waded about twenty yards up. It was certainly rather a rough bottom, but there was a goodly run of water, about 20in. deep, over my head, and there a hole. Just then a bonnie trout jumped out in front of me; that was all. For so bad, and my rod in hand, I re-entered the part whence I came to fish up the gorge. The river had the wading was not so very bad, I also fished or two; then I reached a 30in. hole. These stones in the bottom of the river had the habit of turning over or tilting; at that it was possible to get into a Still, as I advanced, the fishing got

better, and going carefully and quietly I, when I saw a good trout rise, found a firm foot-hold, and after a cast or two hooked my fish, played him—and it *was* fun to see him dash down by me, especially as I dare not shift my position—and eventually brought him to the net. So I went on, the dangers of the gorge having vanished, and the only question arising in my mind being the difficulties of gaining foot-hold.

I was busy playing a half-pounder when a shower came on. Bearing in mind the advice of the stalwart steward, I broke away in the fish, reeled up, and looked round for a chance spot to clamber up the rugged rocks. Not one presented itself, so carefully feeling my way with my feet I started back down-stream. It was a rough journey, and presently it came on to rain in torrents. I little thought I had got so far up, and before I had retraced my steps any appreciable distance I noticed the water was coming down thicker, running considerably faster, *and rising rapidly*. Then I heard a roar, and looking behind me I saw what appeared to be a wall of water rushing towards me; then a false step, a plunge, the noise of a thousand cascades, a sharp pain in the arm, a tug at my leg, another sharp pain through my head, and—unconsciousness.

* * * * *

I stand at the entrance to a broad valley on a crisp cold day, with my rod in my hand and my creel on my back. On either side the gently sloping hills are covered with a soft mantle of snow. In front of me are innumerable boulders, and between them may be traced small threads of

water ; here and there a pool ; *and on my left hand a single twisted wire running from stake to stake up the valley as far as the eye can reach.* I cross over to this wire, and find that immediately by its side runs the main body of the stream that flows down through the valley. I follow the course of the stream and presently arrive at a grand pool. Above is a second plateau covered with boulders, and at the head of the pool *are three pretty cascades.* Standing in shallow water, I cast first beneath one cascade and then another, and the while the snow falls around me in large flakes, for some time I continue to take trout at almost every cast.*

* * * * *

"That's better, old chap, now put your arm here."

I was being carried across the field in front of the farmhouse by my friend and the steward—I fancy the steward was doing most of the carrying! Arrived at our temporary home I was placed carefully upon the sofa—a comfortable affair, not one of the modern innovations—and asked "how I felt."

Well, I didn't feel up to much. I had a splitting headache, a painful arm, and anything but a comfortable leg. The good lady soon had the bed ready, and in two twinks I was half carried and half walked upstairs and safely placed between the sheets.

The next morning I was enlightened upon one

*If this did not occur to me when I was overtaken by the flood in the gorge, I cannot explain when it did ; therefore I have inserted it here. The wonderful part of the whole matter is, that I had not the slightest knowledge that anything of the sort had occurred until some months later, when it was revealed to me in the manner described in the latter part of this article.—E. S. S.

or two points. I had a nasty cut on the side of my head, two or three ditto upon my right arm, and a severely sprained ankle. I was also "sore all over," as the youngster remarked when asked "where he felt bad."

And then I learned how the steward of the estate, guessing probably I should venture up the gorge, had seen the lowering clouds, had followed the course of the stream, and not finding me upon its banks knew I must be up the gorge; how he had boldly started up the swollen river, how he was just in time, and only just, to enable me to be here this night and pen this article; how he, knowing the bed of the river better, had got back safely, and with the assistance of my friend, who had also hastened forward, had carried me to the field in front of the farm-house, where I regained consciousness.

No more fishing for me that week! I got back to the smoky town, but it was several days before I could resume business.

It is April of the following year; once more am I overhauling my tackle, once more am I preparing to depart for another week upon the river that I have such good cause to remember. My companion is my friend of last year. The same railway journey, the same farm-house, the same motherly mistress; but, alas! not the same friendly steward. He has joined the great majority.

In the morning my friend, as before, fishes the lower water; he has grown even yet stouter. I, accompanied by the young fellow who now has charge of the river, and is known as "the keeper,"

walk up to the pool where I commenced operations ten months ago. I get a brace of fish, and further on another, and so on until I reach the entrance to the gorge. The keeper who has heard of my adventure last season suggests probably I should like to turn back. I tell him I think I shall try the water above the gorge. To reach it we have to go about two miles round, and while on our journey a blinding snowstorm comes on. The keeper suggests we had better turn back, as it would be utterly useless trying to fish any more that day. I pooh-pooh the idea, and we press forward. Presently my companion says: "Down here, sir, carefully," and I follow him until we reach once more the side of the stream, which I am informed by the keeper is also the point immediately at the upper entrance of the gorge. The gorge itself and the valley beyond us we cannot see, the snow is falling too thickly. But I still decide to stay on—a mysterious power seems to force me to do so.

And then the snow stops falling. Great Heavens! what is this? On a spot which I *know* I have not trodden before, I stand and gaze up a valley upon which my eyes cannot have rested, and yet the scene is perfectly familiar to me!

I stand at the entrance to a broad valley, the day is cold, my rod is in my hand, and my creel on my back. On either side the gently sloping hills are covered with a soft mantle of snow. In front of me are innumerable boulders, and between them may be traced small threads of water, and here and there a pool!

Yet further wonders ! I turn to my companion to assure myself I am not dreaming, and hoarsely murmuring, "come on," I mechanically move towards *a single twisted wire, running from stake to stake, up the valley as far as the eye can reach,* impelled by a force I cannot, dare not, disobey.

Then I know within myself exactly what is to happen. By the side of the wire I find the main stream of the river and I hurry forward, followed by my amazed attendant, *until I arrive at a pool, at the head of which are three cascades, and beyond which is another plateau covered with boulders. Standing at the bottom of the pool, I make cast after cast, first under one cascade, then under another : and while the snow falls around me in large flakes, at nearly every cast I land a fish !*

And this in reality ! There is no mistake. It is unexplainable ; but it is a fact. The fish cease rising and I turn away. Quietly the keeper and I walk back to the farm-house. My friend has been back some little time, and the while the blue smoke from our pipes curls upward I relate to him my strange experience.

FREE TROUT FISHING ON THE BOWMONT.

"O BOWMONT side! the banks of Aire
 Before that flash of memory fade;
 And Lanton hills are towering there,
 With Newton's vale beneath them laid.
 There wave the very rock-sprung trees
 My curious youth with wonder eyed,
 And here the long broom scents the breeze—
 The yellow broom of Bowmont side!"

Hundreds of my readers will shortly be on their autumn holidays bent. Many of them, as usual, will steam away to Scotland, several little thinking what a wealth of fishing they are leaving behind—fishing that in many cases is free to all comers, and in nearly all is to be obtained by the exercise of a civil application to the owner and a little local influence. To these I say, tarry awhile, break your journey at Bilton Junction, and from there run on to the historic old Northumbrian town Alnwick. For a few days try the excellent waters in the neighbourhood; fish the Aln; give the College a trial, whose

"Pretty rills,
 That tumble down their several hills,"

hold trout in plenty ; cast your flies on the surface of the Till, for

" In Till there's good store of fat trouts to be won ;
Let your skill load your creel as you wander along,
And at night, as you tell of the feats you have done,
Cheer your talk with a cup of good wine and a song."

But should you do so, 'ware the holes ! If not you'll find yourself considerably over your wading boots in water ; the old Border rhyme runs :—

" Says Tweed to Till,
' What gars ye rin sae still ? '
' Sae still as I rin, and so fast as ye gae,
Where ye drown ae man, a'll drown twae.' "

Then is not the famed Coquet within easy reach ? Innumerable waters in Glendale are available, and last, but not least, the Bowmont is under your very nose.

At the risk of being "dry," I purpose to be practical in this article. Pleasing as it would be to me to dilate upon the historic, ecclesiastical, legendary, and pastoral associations connected with the extremely picturesque, varied, and romantic scenery surrounding this dale of glens, my readers will want to know rather about the fishing and "taking" flies.

Come with me then to the Alnwick Railway Station, book to Kirknewton on the Alnwick and Cornhill Branch line, and within an hour we shall be fishing in a district

" Where not a mountain rears its head unsung."

Kirknewton is one of the most interesting parishes perhaps in Northumberland. Hill after hill, green with soft herbage on which sheep are grazing, or gaping with grey rocky fissures, and

tufted with Alpine heather; deep gorges with burns rushing through them down to the glen; clouds passing and hiding hill-top after hill-top; moor grouse and solitary birds swooping now and then, are leading characteristics of this sparsely-inhabited district.

Immediately on leaving the station the angler is on the water. A notice board informs you that close by you are not allowed to fish without permission, but within a few yards you may begin, and the river from that spot up to Canna Mill is free to all, and will provide you with a good day's sport.

I fished it once in the agreeable company of Mr. Harry Hardy, of the firm of Hardy Brothers, the well-known rod makers. Until you reach the water immediately below Canna Mill this stretch of the Bowmont consists of a succession of steady flowing pools, with here and there a bit of troubled water. We found the river very low and bright, but the surface of the stream was broken in several places by the succession of rings which betray the presence of rising trout. It was a case of "dry-fly and fine and far off." At any time this water is to be successfully negotiated in this manner, but when it is very low and bright the south country floater is indispensable if you wish to kill fish. In one of those "glassy glides" at the head of a pool I noticed unmistakable evidence of a feeding fish, and mounting a small dark Olive Quill I commenced business. At the second time of asking he came and was creeled after a pretty tough fight (these Bowmont trout fight well), proving to be a well-conditioned fish of about three-quarters of a pound. Not a bad

beginning, but for half an hour after I could not tempt another. Then in a bit of broken water the welcome tug came and a plucky little half-pounder was creeled.

I did not care to pass good water where the fish were rising freely at something, so sat me down, had resource to my pipe, and decided to put a Greenwell over them. That fly proved too much for a brace during the next hour; but it was hard work. Disappointed with the result of the pools I wended my way to the water below the mill. It is as pretty a succession of rough streams and small pools as I have ever fished. The dry fly here is of no use, so mounting the north country style—three flies—I set to work, and was rewarded with a fish or two. Then I retraced my steps, and, during the afternoon, picked up a trout or two on the pools below, finishing up an enjoyable day with a pound fish. He was feeding in a cosy little corner and sucking in all that came down. He bolted the Pink Wickham I presented to his sight and got "sucked in" himself. It took a fifteen yard cast to reach him, and most of the fish I had that day were hooked at about the same distance.

I creeled about five brace of fish during the day that would average about two the pound. Mr. Hardy had about six brace. It was more than an average day for this water, the fish generally running about three to the pound, with an occasional pounder; *but we had to fish*. My friend seemed to think we had done very well; so did I. Go thou and do likewise.

Best flies are the ordinary Duns, Red Spinner, Greenwell, Turkey Brown, Wickham, and

Cockerton Sedge—leastway, that's what I think. An ordinary 10ft. fly rod is all that is necessary. Let your tackle be fine and your flies not too small. Wading boots are necessary. It is a funny stream to get at in places, and you should have your hands free. I mean, you should have some simple arrangement for carrying your landing net.

FANCY TROUT FLIES.

Under the nom de plume of "Ibis Tag" this article was written in connection with a controversy re the advisability of using "fancy flies."

Their name is legion, yet each and everyone has at some time gladdened the heart of an angler as the whir-r-r of the winch and the steady strain upon rod and line have unmistakably made known the fact that a lusty trout has succumbed to the wiles of a new and hitherto untried "dressing." With what reluctance do we discard for a short time our favourite dun, grouse hackle or partridge hackle, and mount the fly that has been handed to us by a friend, with the assurance, "It's a sure killer ; I had so many brace with it on such a date, and the fish would not look at any other fly." We say the fly is reluctantly mounted, and so it is nine times out of ten, and yet our experience has taught us that any out-of-the-way pattern is worth trying *under certain circumstances.*

No angler would dream of using any other fly than an exact imitation of the *ephemera* on the water when the fish are feeding during a grand rise of the Yellow, Blue, or Olive Dun, Quill Gnat, &c. But how often does it happen that we fish a whole day and not a single "rise" of fly occurs ?

Then, when each fish has to be picked out and fished for with the patience and perseverance that only good anglers possess, then is the usefulness of fancy flies clearly demonstrated.

The man who attempts to classify or enumerate the different patterns of fancy trout flies will—we unhesitatingly assert—end his days in a lunatic asylum ; and as we have no wish to rush to such a fate, we will satisfy ourselves with a few remarks upon those we have used and killed fish with, and at the same time endeavour to show why we have accepted the systematic use of fancy flies as an important branch of our education in the art of catching trout with the artificial fly.

It is a day when there is no “rise” on, only a few duns hatching out here and there, and even those few are ignored by the trout unless one happens to float immediately over the nose of a fish, when he lazily moves towards it and sucks it down in a “don’t-care-whether-I-have-it-or-not” manner. Still it is a rise, and we carefully place an exact imitation of the fly he has taken a yard in front of him. It floats down as it should do, but the trout merely looks at it out of the corner of his eye, as much as to say, “I’ve seen some of your sort before !” and it passes him untouched. A rest, and he is tried again with the same result. Yet another unsuccessful trial, and then we determine to put a different fly over him, for undoubtedly he will succumb to a tit-bit if we can only please his palate. The fly we have been trying is very light in hue, so we mount one dressed with same wings, hackle, and tail, but *with silver tinsel body* (had the first fly been darker we should have chosen one with a *gold*

tinsel body), and this we carefully place in front of the fish. As it reaches him he shifts uneasily; it passes him and we are just about to pick it from the water, when he turns round—there is a rush, the line tightens, and we realise that the fancy fly has done what the exact imitation of the natural fly could not do—it has lured that trout to its death. We care not to inquire *why* he has taken it, we are satisfied with the fact that he has, and the plunge of the fish as we carefully but determinedly lead him towards the net, and the sight of his handsomely-spotted side, as we gently place him in our creel, make us forget that we doubted if we were doing right when we attached that silver-bodied lure to our cast in place of the artistically-dressed imitation of the fly that same trout had sucked in only such a short time since. It is wonderful what a bit of silver—tinsel, will do towards filling a creel at times.

But it may happen very frequently that the trout will utterly ignore the bit of silver or gold, and then a small red tag should be attached to the exact imitation of the natural fly, and presented to the fish, and that will probably have the desired effect. It is truly marvellous the attraction a bit of red has for a trout *sometimes*—they “go” for it like a bull at a red cloth. So firmly convinced are we of the value of a bit of red attached to *any* fly that we have adopted the practice of carrying very small pieces of kid, dyed a vermilion colour, and when a fish repeatedly refuses a dun, gnat, spinner, or other fly we may be using, we simply stick one of the small pieces of kid on the hook, and have frequently killed fish we are convinced

we should otherwise have been compelled to leave in their native element.

Should the fish refuse both the silver or gold and the red tag, try them combined, and if that is ineffectual, mount a large Sedge or Palmer, and fairly "smack" it at the fish, same as you would at a chub. This may seem absurd advice to give to an angler who has been using the finest gut, smallest flies, and greatest amount of skill and patience over a lazy fish, but it is given in all seriousness, and we emphatically say, "Try it." We would also repeat here that any pattern fly is worth a trial under such circumstances, merely adding that the above *should* prove effectual.

It will probably be noticed that we particularly emphasise the fact that in all cases the exact imitation of the fly on the water should first be tried, and tried thoroughly, before the fancy fly is used. We go farther than that, and confidently advise our readers, after they have taken or tried to take a fish with a fancy fly, to resume the use of the exact imitation over the next, as we consider it nearly always has the best chance; and we say this with a perfect knowledge that our friend who advised us to use a new pattern because "It's a sure killer; I had so many brace with it on such a date, and the fish would not look at any other fly," is not necessarily drawing upon his imagination. We have upon more than one occasion succeeded in taking several fish with the same fancy fly, and under such circumstances we have decided to continue using it, and have filled our creel with good fish; but these cases are few and far between, and we have noticed that we have never done much afterwards with that

same fancy fly upon the same stream. We may have killed a fish or two with it, but we should have gone home with a poor catch had we used it, and it only throughout another day. Our experience may be exceptional—we fancy not—but such as it is we give it. In this connection we would remark that we do not refer to such fancy flies as the Wickham, Coachman, Greenwell's Glory, etc. Yet another suggestion: when we have first tried the exact imitation, and then the silver, red tag, &c., and *not* tried the large Sedge or Palmer "smacked" at the fish (which, of course, if it does not capture, invariably scares), we have frequently once more mounted the exact imitation, and with it been successful.

The popularity of the Coachman as an evening fly is beyond doubt; but those of our readers who have not tried it with the addition of a red tag should do so; its killing powers are doubled when the little bit of red is attached.

The Wickham is a grand fancy fly, especially upon a wet blustering day, and with a red tag attached is at times irresistible. We well remember fishing a private lake in the South of England, well stocked with bonnie trout, upon a day when it was with great difficulty a line could be kept on the water at all. We had previously found that a Dark Professor, Pink Wickham, or large Golden Sedge were the successful flies on this water during the day, and we generally finished up in the evening with a few casts with the Coachman as our lure. The genial proprietor of the water had asserted that we had little chance of filling our creel upon this particular day, and really we were of much the same opinion.

However, the Professor, Sedge, and Wickham were each in their turn presented to the fish—all to no purpose ; and then we thought of the magic bit of red. It was immediately attached to a Wickham, and with it we killed a very decent basket of fish, much to the surprise of the proprietor, and greatly to our own satisfaction.

We may be accused of too highly praising the use of a red tag, but we speak from experience. We have tried yellow, white, and green, in addition, but have invariably found the red the most successful. When in the early part of the season the trout are feeding upon the March Brown, just try the addition of a bit of red, and see if the result does not bear out our statement.

Another grand fancy fly is Greenwell's Glory. When the trout have been madly rising at the Iron Blue or any dark dun, and then suddenly stop rising, a few fish may be killed with the Greenwell that we unhesitatingly assert would not succumb to the exact imitation of the fly they have been feeding upon. We have killed fish with the Greenwell, after they have been fairly gorged with a grand rise of May-fly, and, as our readers must know, it is a very difficult matter to tempt them under such circumstances.

Who has not picked up a few fish with the Governor when they are "shrimping" on the shallow edges of the river or stream ? Who has not killed fish with Hofland's Fancy ? In fact, how often do we have to resort to fancy flies if we wish to fill our creel ? Although, as stated above we invariably give the exact imitation of the natural fly the preference, we are not one of those

who are so stupid as to rather go home fishless than use any other lure than the orthodox dun. After all, we go fishing to catch fish.

The great fault of fancy flies, as sold by most tackle dealers, is that they are far too big and coarse. The same fly dresser that will dress a dun to perfection seems to think (in many cases) that a fancy fly does not need the same skill and care. This is a great mistake ; anything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Fancy flies at times are very useful to the trout fisherman, and should be dressed as carefully and correctly as the most delicate dun.

A TALE OF A PIE—CHASED BY A PIKE—A PARTING SHOT.

A BITTERLY cold evening in February. A grey afternoon rapidly changing to a black night. A cruel north-east wind cutting me almost in two. Four miles of dreary turnpike road before I could reach home. No companion but my pipe and a mongrel cur that had sneaked up to me a mile or so back, and had persisted in following at my heels. Even the cur was some company, and mongrel-bred as he was, there was something in his eyes that prompted me to refrain from compelling him to follow a road in a contrary direction to my own.

No wonder then that the bright, flickering light seen through the red blinds of a little way-side inn—suggestive of a huge log fire and "egg-fillip" within—tempted me to leave the highway, raise the latch of the door, and seek the warm shelter of the cosy half-bar, half-smoking-room, that the passage with clean, red brick floor led to. A handsome pike of more than 20lbs. weight, mounted and preserved in a manner creditable to the taxidermist, attracted my attention, and I was more than surprised to see hung in the back of

the case a child's slipper—one of those with straps and a button, that some of us wore with white socks years back.

"That's father's tale," said the young woman who was watching over the interests of the establishment, in answer to my very natural inquiry as to the connection between the pike and the slipper. "He's in the other room. There has been a gentleman fishing in the lake to-day, and they are talking together."

At my request I was shown into "the other room." Deal tables, a sanded floor, a huge fire in the old-fashioned grate, a something which appeared to me like a large candle extinguisher, and which I afterwards learned was a "beer-warmer," stuck in the glowing embers, and a company of four, three of whom were listening to the discourse of the fourth, whom I correctly surmised to be the landlord. One of the other three was an individual who could have easily "pulled" the beam at 20st. He was smoking a long clay pipe, which he loosely held in his hand, the bowl and greater part of the stem resting upon his capacious stomach; a Sheffield shaft would be out of it with this gentleman from a smoking point of view; he was dressed half-farmer, half-gamekeeper style, and his face would have made an excellent danger signal. The second individual was a short, thin, wee little man; if he weighed seven stone it was as much as ever. He had the general appearance of a tailor, which as a matter of fact he was. The third was the gentleman who had been fishing in the lake; an elaborately got up specimen of a sportsman, who seemed very proud of his "catch," a pretty pike of about 8lbs., that

was carefully laid out at full length upon one of the deal tables.

The landlord was a man of about fifty, hale and hearty—a merry rogue, for a ducat. An amused mischievous twinkle in his dark eyes betrayed the purport of his discourse—yarn spinning. It was a fish-tale that my entry interrupted, and a remark from me that I was fond of fishing myself, and felt curious about the pike and the slipper, immediately made me one of the circle. The contents of the extinguisher being divided among us, the landlord resumed.

“I was just going to explain to this gentleman, sir,” alluding to the proud proprietor of the pike, “why that slipper is put up with the pike, You must know, sir, the lake below here, about a couple of miles away, holds some grand fish, and the owner is very liberal in granting permission. I generally have two or three days every season. Well, years ago, my chum upon fishing expeditions was old Tom P——e, and a grand fisherman he was, too. Poor chap, he lies yonder now. I never saw a man yet handle a fish like Tom could. Now, you must understand my missus makes grand meat pies—I’ll back her against any woman breathing—and when we went fishing we always took one with us. Lor ! how Tom did enjoy those pies ! Upon this particular occasion my missus was a bit ill-tempered. Tom and I had had several days together in different waters, and she objected to me ‘gadding about’ so much, as she called it, and flatly refused to make the pie that was so necessary to our complete enjoyment of the day. Here was a pretty fix ! My missus, now, has a temper of her own, eh ! Bill ?” to the twenty

stone man, who in reply heaved a long-drawn "Ah!"—"and when she was a younger woman she made things a bit awkward when she put her back up. However, a judicious suggestion that a trip to the neighbouring town for a few things that were wanted about house would be necessary soon, an allusion to the fact that a day at the lake was what 'I eagerly looked forward to, and an assurance that it would be the last outing for some time to come had the desired effect—she made the pie. The following day Tom and I were at it, and we ran some good fish before the middle of the day. We had the punt, and Tom was spinning—a style he was fond of and a master hand at. Pie time came and out came the pie. I generally officiated in cutting it up, and placing it upon the seat in front of me, I prepared to help my friend to a portion. As I thrust the fork in it hit against something pretty hard, and upon operating with the knife I only got through the crust. Curious! I thought, and lifting the crust my face lengthened out about forty holes as I exposed to view *a pair of kid's slippers!* Tom roared with laughter, but I saw nothing to laugh at. We had to satisfy our hunger with bread and cheese. Well, sir, out of pure fun Tom took one of the slippers, and attaching it to his spinning flight he made a cast. Two seconds after he was into a good fish, and ten minutes later I had the pleasure of gaffing for him the pike that is in the case; it weighed 22lbs. Now, I wouldn't recommend kid's slippers as a bait for pike, but it is a positive fact that the one in the case was caught with the slipper you see at the back!"

Two of the company had evidently heard the tale before, yet still appreciated it, for the twenty-stone man became lost in a cloud of smoke, and the little tailor looked upon the angler of the day and myself as much as to say: "Now what do you think of *that*?" Again the extinguisher passed round, and fish-lying once started it went merrily forward. Presently the twenty-stone man addressing me, said:

"Now, you wouldn't think a man of his size," pointing his clay-pipe at the little tailor, "would ever have the cheek to go fishing for a pike that was big enough to eat two like that every day?" alluding to the eight-pounder on the deal table. "But he had, though, and it was nearly the death of him, wasn't it, Sam?" to the landlord, who nodded assent.

The tailor shifted uneasily in his seat; I could at once see what was coming—a stock chaffing tale, and a good one by the roguish look of the landlord directed towards me. I was not disappointed.

"Yes, sir, some little time back a big pike was noticed feeding about four miles down the river. Several had a try for him, Sam had several goes, but the fish either wouldn't bite, or when he did, broke clean away. Well, one morning I saw Peter—that's him—with rod and tackle and a big can of baits. For once he was dressed decently, with such a pair of gaiters on! 'Where now, Peter?' I shouted. 'Oh!' said he, 'I'm going after that pike!' 'What!' I said, 'the big un?' 'Of course,' said he, and away he went. Well, sir, I felt troubled about him; my mind was regular uneasy like, and I, after an hour or so,

made for the river with the intention of seeing no harm had come to him, for it *might* have been the pike had swallowed him ; but luckily it had not, although what happened was quite bad enough. I had hardly started when I saw the tailor coming up from the riverside, hatless, only one gaiter on, and hardly a breath left in him. He bolted into his house, and we never saw him for two days. His tackle was found by the riverside, close to where the pike usually fed, and from information received, sir, I am able to tell you what happened. You see, as soon as he got down to the spot where the fish was, he started to fit up his tackle ; but directly the pike saw him, and noticed what he was up to, he jumped clean out of the water at him, and barked like a dog. That frightened Peter, and away he went, and away went the pike after him ! Although Peter is *such* a little 'un he can run, but when it comes to four miles it's rather warm work. The fish chased him right up to the bridge close to our village ; several times he jumped out of the water at him, and once, at Long's Corner, he caught him by the gaiter ; Peter, however, managed to clear away *minus* his gaiter, and the pike having swallowed it resumed the chase. It's a lucky thing for Peter, sir, that pike haven't got legs, or it's my opinion that one would have followed him right home !"

A roar of laughter went round at the tailor's expense ; he took it all in good part though, and presently turning to me said.

"Haven't you anything to tell us, sir ?"

I told him my angling experiences were limited, and that I had no tales to tell—couldn't tell them if I had.

"But," I said, "probably you have all seen tame fish." They nodded assent. "Well, a gentleman I know had a lake, and some of the pike in it were so tame they would take food quite close to the edge of the water. If you threw bits of meat, bread, or anything to them they would catch and swallow them. One of them became quite an expert in catching, and would come up to the side, poke its head out of the water, open its mouth and take in anything you threw. I saw it swallow seven Brussels sprouts one day, and upon one occasion it swallowed a Spanish onion. Often visitors would cheat the fish and throw pebbles to it; but it made no difference, it swallowed all—in fact, it got to like pebbles so much that when caught, as it was one day by an angler who did not know it was a tame fish, upon being weighed it scaled 13lbs., but after the pebbles were taken out it only weighed 4lbs.!"

Solemn silence reigned. Without a word the landlord quietly rose from his seat and left the room, returning with a large button, which he handed to me, saying:

"It's yours, sir, and you are worthy of holding it. It's our button, and is held by the man who tells the biggest lie in this room. I've held it for many years with the slipper tale, but I bow to superior genius!"

I attempted to explain that the pebble tale was founded upon fact, but they would not have it. Again the extinguisher was brought into use. The captor of the 8lb. pike was driving in my direction, and I availed myself of his kind offer of "a lift."

I have the button still.

BOB WEBB'S BIG DAY.

SHADE of Izaak! what am I to do? I have just left an Editor. "We should like to have a contribution from you for our Christmas number. Let it be something appropriate to the time of the year—something Christmassy. It must be about fishing, and keep the whisky drinking out of it!" This in earnest from he who—but no matter.

Fancy, a Christmas fishing jaunt and no whisky! As I stagger down Fetter-lane, I recall the fact that my coat is lined with *watered* silk, my scarf-pin is a miniature pump, even my watch is a *Waterbury*. And now—"Hansom!" "*Waterloo*, sir?" "No," I shriek, "anywhere but there or the Thames Embankment."

"Water, water everywhere, and
Not a drop to drink!"

My cabby pulls up at Short's. "Thoughtful creature," I murmur, "but it cannot be." I reach home, and with a throbbing brow endeavour to collect my scattered ideas. It is not till I have had a whi— wet towel round my head that I am enabled to produce this narrative. But keep whisky out of a fishing expedition! and at Christmas!

In the first place, be it understood that Bob Webb is no myth. He was and is a substantial reality. His weight last time I saw him was 17st. 9lbs. He is a well-to-do tradesman in a village in Blankshire. A kindly man, who would never see a friend want. I have known Bob to share the contents of his pocket with a poorer fellow-creature upon more than one occasion. A man whom you can grip by the hand, and, although it is fat and flabby, appreciate the owner. Fond of fishing? Rather! Fishing and "hosses" are his weakness. When I say weakness, I do not mean that he neglects any duty to indulge in either fishing *or* "hosses." But when Bob starts fishing he means it; and when he takes a "hoss" in hand he generally makes something of it presentable. Even if the quadruped does not come up to what might please you or me, at any rate Bob is satisfied—and that is everything with him.

A friend once called on him to have a look at a horse that he had been praising to the skies. The opinion passed was very satisfactory, and the friend was invited to participate in a drive behind the animal the following morning. There at the appointed time was the "hoss," and there Bob and his friend. The horse was attached to a favourite dog-cart of the owner's; said dog-cart had an extra leaf in the spring on driver's side.

"Isn't he a picture? Look how quietly he stands!" quoth Bob. "Get up" (to his friend).

His friend mounted to his seat and Bob followed.

"Now just look ! He won't stir until I tell him to.—Walk !"

Obedient to the word of command the horse moved on in a stately manner, champing bit, and tossing his head as he went. Presently—"Trot !" says Bob.

Again the animal obeys and breaks into an easy trot.

"There !" says the owner, " that's what I call having him under command."

Arrived at a nice level part of the road Bob sings out—" Gallop !"

That horse then started an easy swinging gallop that would have delighted anyone. After a bit, " Whoa !" exclaimed Bob. He did whoa !—pulled up instanter. The friend was jerked clean over the "hoss's " head, Bob was thrown over the side, carrying the wing board with him, but the animal stood stock still. When Bob bounced to his feet he turned round to his friend, who was engaged in wiping the dust and dirt from his person, and trying to find out how many bones were broken, and said,

"Here's a pretty mess ! but"—with pride—" hadn't I got him under control !"

That is just him all over — never put out. I have known him to go thirty-six miles' drive for a day's fishing, find out the place was a fraud when he got there, come home with a few miserable rudd, and start talking of what a grand crib it would be if properly stocked and looked after. Bob was founder, chairman, sec., and treasurer of the local angling club ; the vice-chair was his boon companion, one Dick Danes. The club only consisted of eleven members ; meetings were held

once a week, and the attendance was eight or nine through the evening. Principal business, the discussing of past records, and arrangements for future expeditions against the inhabitants of the local waters. At times a little "special Irish" was indulged in, but very seldom, and even then to no great extent.

Upon more than one of these occasions it was declared to be a great shame that *the* piece of water in the neighbourhood was closed against the local anglers. The water in question was a really magnificent lake of nearly sixty acres, well stocked with pike, perch, roach, etc. Imagine, then, the surprise and delight of the assembled members, when one evening Bob having asked, "Is there any other business, gentlemen?" in a manner that plainly told he, at least, had something of more than usual importance to announce to his companions, proceeded to read a letter from the owner of this fishing paradise, in which it was stated that R. Webb, Esq., and two friends had the privilege of fishing in the moat for one day.

"I have brought the letter down, gentlemen," said Bob, "so that *we* can arrange who is to go. For my own part I wish all could accompany me, but as only two can, I propose that the names of the members are placed in a hat and we draw two out, those whose names are drawn to make up the party."

This novel way of inviting a friend to a day's fishing was adopted; result, Dick Danes, Harry Pettitt (the host). The faces of the members during the important proceeding bore much the same expression as Mr. Pickwick's did while on

the slide ; and those of the lucky individuals underwent the same change as his did at the completion of the perilous journey.

Vague suggestions were made that Bob should divulge the means by which he came possessed of this coveted permit, but he ignored all. I have reason to believe that his valuable assistance in a local parliamentary election had *something* to do with it.

The lucky trio met at an early date to make the necessary arrangements ; they decided to avail themselves of the permission on Boxing Day, and I need not say all looked forward eagerly to the time when they would be free to exercise their skill upon the little-frequented water.

Before I go any further with this narrative it is necessary I should inform you of the fact that Bob was a bachelor. How he managed to keep clear of the many traps laid to ensnare him is a mystery. All I ever got from him on the point was a long-drawn "A—h—h ! It might have been, but now—well, it never will !" I rather fancy Bob lost his heart years ago. But if he had no wife, he certainly had got a cosy, plump, and smart housekeeper. Her face, which shone with the bloom of health and good-nature, continually wore a smile ; her steak and kidney pies were simply perfection. Can I say more in her favour ? Yes ; she had her tongue entirely under control.

I have said Bob Webb is no myth. Now, as to his big day the least said by me the better. I leave you to form your own opinion. This much for my own protection. He himself assures me

of his veracity, and his genial housekeeper backs him up in at least one particular. I wish to say that I consider it a remarkable fishing exploit, and would like to indulge in just such another myself. Can't say, though, that I care much for his companion.

It was Christmas Eve. Bob, Dick, and Harry sat round the fireside at Bob's house. On the table were the remains of what had been a by no means despicable repast. There was something else on the table also. *That* was gradually being disposed of as the evening wore on. Each time this something was raised to the mouth of either of the trio, they smacked their lips, and eyed each other in a very satisfied manner ; so I suppose it was whisky.

Need I say the main topic of their conversation was the fishing jaunt on Boxing Day? All arrangements were made, and Bob was to dine with his friend Pettitt on the Christmas Day.

Both Dick and Harry had to get to the bosom of their family, so at a reasonable hour the two left their companion, who having wished them God-speed at the front-door, turned, and having remarked, "What a lovely bright night it is," went in-door. Once more he went through his tackle, just to see all was right ; and then he lit his pipe and sat quietly looking into the fire for some few minutes. Who knows what Bob's thoughts were that night as he sat by his fireside, wanting only one thing in the world? Many of his neighbours, who spoke of Mr. Webb's easy position in life, little knew that, notwithstanding his assured financial position, upon such occasions as this, when brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and

children met in happy circles, Bob felt so lonely—oh, so lonely !

The entrance of his housekeeper disturbed his reverie. Having been assured her services were not further required that evening she retired, and then Bob turned and made himself "just one more" glass of grog. But somehow he did not seem satisfied with it—just too much water ; then it got a little too much whisky ; once more diluted it had the original fault, and yet again it was too strong. He re-filled his pipe and leant back in his chair ; his thoughts took a different turn, and his busy brain soon suggested fishing as a solace. All his "red letter" days passed rapidly before him as he thought how they were all—aye ! all—to be beaten on Boxing Day. How he longed for the time to come. Well, I don't suppose Bob Webb is the only one who has looked forward to such a day ; but there are few who have their unexpressed wish so quickly gratified. At that moment there came a thundering rat-tat-tat at the door that echoed and re-echoed through the quiet house. Up sprang Bob, and in a twink he had the front door unfastened, and opening it, found to his surprise the ground covered with snow, a blinding snow-storm raging, and the wind howling among the bare trees opposite. So strong was the wind that Bob's burly form had to be placed before the open door to prevent it being blown to. Bang ! went the drawing-room door, as an extra strong gust passed him and entered the house. All this, I say, surprised Bob ; but what fairly staggered him was—in front of his house stood the brougham of the noble owner of the preserve he was to fish so soon. On the box sat a tall,

lithe coachman, who immediately asked, "Should he come in?"

It never struck Bob at the time as being peculiar that no one was near who could have given that thundering rap. He answered at once "Certainly," and the coachman threw the reins upon the horses' backs and descended from his perch, remarking, "It is a roughish morning." As he spoke the village bells burst into a peal, welcoming the advent of another Christmas morn. "Yes, it is," said Bob. "How about the horses?" "Oh! they'll stand all right," returned the coachman; "let's get inside." Bob led the way in, thinking at the same time his visitor's manner rather peremptory. Arrived in the snug drawing-room, he still further astonished Bob by seating himself upon the table, dangling his legs and gazing at him with a half-comical, half-inquiring look.

"Got any whisky, old man?" he queried.

Without answering this question Bob quietly told him that he considered he was taking rather a liberty, and requested him to state what brought him there at such a time.

"Oh, that's easily told. I am a friend of —— (mentioning the noble owner's name), and hearing you were coming fishing, I thought I would give you a look up. Will you come this morning and have an hour or two with me?"

This statement, and a peculiar feeling that was gradually possessing Bob—a feeling that would not allow him to be astonished at anything—put matters in a better light. The whisky was passed, and without hesitation he informed his guest that he would have been delighted to

accompany him had the weather been more propitious.

"Weather!" ejaculated his visitor, "who cares for weather? That!" with a snap of his fingers, "for the weather. Just a nice ripple on the water, eh? Enough frost to sharpen the appetite of the pike, eh? Not enough snow to interfere with sport, eh? *I* don't care for the weather; and if I did this is just the sort of day I should pick out for pike fishing!" Here the stranger lit a big cigar, gulped down a tumbler of grog, handed his glass to Bob, and continued: "You need not trouble about tackle or baits; I have plenty for both of us. We'll take some of this whisky, though, eh? and some cigars. Slip on your coat and boots, and off we go!"

Only half convinced, but a consenting party, Bob did as he was requested. Arrived outside, his companion told him to get in the brougham; he would drive. A ringing peal of laughter from the stranger accompanied our friend's efforts to squeeze himself through the doorway of the vehicle, a task he accomplished with some difficulty. His strange companion mounted the box, and drove away at a terrific rate. Trees, hedges, and houses fairly flew by the window of the brougham, as it bounded over the snow-covered ground. Peal after peal of laughter burst from the driver as he urged on his wild career. Bob, however, took it all in good part, and ultimately the lake was reached. By this time the storm had considerably abated, and as our friend looked upon the magnificent sheet of water, the spirit of the angler predominated, and he was ready and eager for the fray.

"Want to begin, eh?" said his companion. "Plenty of twenty-pounders there waiting to be caught. Look at that!"

"That" was a grand swirl about twenty yards from the bank. Another second, and the broad tail of a pike appeared above the surface of the water, as the fish turned to dive, having captured its prey.

"My!" gasped Bob, "what a fish! Where *is* the tackle?"

"Here it is."

Our friend turned, and sure enough there stood his companion with rod, reel, line, and accessories ready for use. He handed them to Bob, and then stopped and picked out of a large can by his side about as neat a dace as ever blessed the eyes of any angler.

"That snap," said the stranger, "is one of my own. Perhaps I had better bait it for you. See how easily it's done! The winch, too, you will find rather better than those you have been in the habit of using, and as for the line—well, try it. Stop!"—(Bob was drawing the line off the winch and coiling it upon the ground preparatory to making a cast)—"there is no need to do that. Just look and think where you want your bait to alight. With an easy action cast in the direction. You'll find the outfit work to perfection, I believe."

Now, our friend had never been properly able to master the art of casting from the winch, but obeying his instructor, with an easy movement he swung the bait towards the spot where the big fish had moved. Much to his delight, instead of the tackle coming back, twining itself round his

portly form, and finally fastening the hooks in the tail of his coat, as it had been in the habit of doing, the bait dropped in the desired spot, and the cast was a complete success.

"What d'ye think of that?" inquired the stranger. "Is that snap better than Jardine's, eh? Is that winch better than Slater's, eh? Is that line better than Foster's, eh? Did Slater himself ever make a cleaner cast?"

Bob was too busy to answer, for at that moment the downward dive of the float and the rapid tightening of the line told him he had a run. When he struck, oh! the thrill that passed through him, as the strong plunge of the fish told him he had at last hooked one of those monsters he had so long wished to handle. After showing some grand sport, the fish was brought to the gaff, and Bob's eyes were gladdened with the sight of a twenty-five pounder.

"Don't kill him!" cried his companion. "Let him live; I like to see them jumping on the bank. How they do jump, to be sure! In for another!" I cannot describe the wild excitement of the next hour or so, but any angler can imagine it when I say that "jumping" upon the bank alive at the same time were seven or eight splendid fish, all over 15lbs., and several over 20lbs., in weight.

During the whole time Bob's strange companion continued to indulge in peals of the most unearthly laughter, and frequently asked our friend's opinion of the tackle, accompanying his queries with the ejaculation, "Eh?"

And now a lamentable occurrence happened. The horses had all this time been patiently

waiting, but, as I suppose, getting rather uneasy, they started off at a rapid gallop towards the castle, pursued by the now frantic stranger. Bob laid down his tackle and watched the *denouement*. At a turn in the carriage drive—notwithstanding the pace the runaways were going at—our friend's strange companion, who seemed literally to fly over the ground, succeeded in catching and turning them. And then occurred the strangest act on this unaccountable man's part. At one leap he alighted on top of the brougham, and there with a long whip he mysteriously became possessed of urged on the maddened horses *right in the direction of where Bob was fishing*. Our friend at once realised his dangerous position, but from some reason could not stir from the spot on which he stood. Nearer and nearer came the goaded animals, louder and louder grew the peals of laughter from the individual urging them on. In sheer desperation Bob made a final effort, but to no purpose. Crash! Our friend remembered no more than *that the fish he had caught, in regular line, swam off into the depths of the lake*; he heard the water surging around him, and—

“Mr. Webb! Mr. Webb! Whatever is the matter?”

Bob rubbed his eyes, and looked round, to find himself at his own fireside with his comely house-keeper (who had been disturbed by the fall of the glassware—Bob had fallen forward and overturned the table) nearly frightened out of her life.

So ended Bob Webb's big day.

IN FLOOD.

I HAD been fishing the Coquet, and although the water in that river was very low and bright, had been fairly successful, when the receipt of a letter from my friend, Mr. W. J. Cummins, of Bishop Auckland, induced me to leave that paradise of the trout fisherman and proceed to the home of one of the most enthusiastic anglers I know. The said letter informed me that my friend had obtained permission to fish the Greta at Rokeby Hall, and what angler would not have given up even the Coquet for such an enviable privilege ?

The weather during my holiday had so far been all I could wish, and a great deal better than I could expect in this country of "a succession of weathers." Sol had been graciously pleased to preside over my efforts on the Aln, Bowmont, Colegate, and Coquet, and when the cumulus clouds did bank up on the horizon, they soon dispersed under his soothing influence, occasionally just spitting their spite upon me and the surrounding country, as much as to say : "You can see what we would do if we only had the chance." Their efforts were futile, for my light mackintosh nicely protected me, and the warm showers were

welcomed by the thirsty flora, which in its gratitude filled the atmosphere with that delightful aroma that one puts out one's pipe and again and again inflates one's lungs with, involuntarily thanking the Supreme Power that allows one to live and enjoy such a luxury.

What wonder, then, that my journey to Bishop Auckland was passed in blissful anticipation of heavy creels? But as the train ran into Durham the rumbling of distant thunder and the darkening sky truthfully foretold what was to come, and later on, upon my arrival at my friend's home, the storm had burst over us, and the rain came down; well, it *did* rain! A Yorkshire farmer in the train had kindly told me there was a lot of it to come; it would be general, and was wanted. If that man had been as dry as a wooden image, I believe I would not have stood him a drink.

Friend Cummins asserted that the Greta soon flooded—but equally as soon cleared, and as through the night no rain fell, and the morning broke with every prospect of a fine day, we decided to start on the war-path. From Bishop Auckland to Barnard Castle by rail is only about one hour's run, and upon our arrival at that picturesque town, we found the gentleman from whom the Tees Fishery licence is procurable was still in the arms of the drowsy god. While awaiting his arrival from the regions of slumber, we adjourned to a local tobacconist's, and provided ourselves with some sun-dried tobacco. We then went into the King's Head, and ordered a trap to convey us to the scene of our day's fishing. Acting upon the advice given by Newman Noggs to Nicholas Nickleby: "Call at the King's Head,

Mr. Nicholas, and get a glass of their ale, and, Mr. Nicholas, you may say Mr. Noggs there," we sampled some of their beer, and very acceptable it was, too. From the little room in which we imbibed the potent juice of barleycorn, the quaint shop with a clock over the front of the door and the magic name, "Humphrey," boldly displayed on the fascia, at once brought to my mind the famous novelist's "Humphrey's Clock," and I was not at all surprised to learn the natives quite believe Dickens christened his interesting serial after this house. It was in "Humphrey's Clock" the two marvellous novels, "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Barnaby Rudge," appeared, and one can easily imagine the surroundings of Barnard Castle would produce those impressions upon the great mind that guided his pen in the production of two of his best efforts.

But our licence is now available, our trap is ready, the sun is getting high in the skies, and the order of the day is fishing. What a lovely drive it is from Barnard Castle to the old Abbey Bridge! What a sight it is from the bridge up that grand stretch of the Tees! Sir Walter only did justice to it when he described this spot :

" Where Tees, full many a fathom low,
Wears with his rage no common foe ;
Nor pebbly bank nor sand-bed here,
Nor clay-mound, checks his fierce career.
Condemned to mine a channel'd way
O'er solid sheets of marble grey."

The many weird stories and historical reminiscences connected with this wild spot would have found a prominent place in my thoughts had not the sight of the troubled Tees

dispelled any hope we might have had as to being able to cast our flies upon the surface of the Greta that day. My friend had said directly we saw the Tees it would tell us within a little how the Greta would be, and there below us the water roared and boiled over huge boulders—in flood! Had I been returning with a heavy creel, or even going with the prospect of getting one, I should have stopped and admired where so much is worthy of admiration. But what could I do? What would you have done? I had eyes—and anything but a blessing—only for the thick, coffee-coloured water below.

Hoping against hope we drove on further, and presently arrived at the entrance-gate to Rokeby Hall. Here we alighted, and, having instructed the driver to await our return, walked up the carriage drive, and a few moments found us engaged in earnest conversation with the courteous steward of the owner of the beautiful demesne.

In answer to our numerous inquiries, he said the rain of yesterday had been sadly wanted, and if it kept fine, the river would be in excellent trim for fishing the following day. In fact, it was his opinion the rain that had already fallen would in the end prove a great friend to us.

Contenting ourselves with this reflection, we turned to retrace our steps, and on our way back had a look at the water we should have fished that day, and hoped to fish to-morrow. Ah! that to-morrow.

By our side ran the glorious Greta, but instead of pursuing its way in a murmuring manner as is its wont when fishable, the water fairly roared

as it swept by the moss-covered boulders, many of which were nearly submerged beneath the torrent of discoloured water that was doing the river so much good, but destroying our present piscatorial prospects. On either bank the mass of varied hued foliage reared itself as if in protection of the millions of wild flowers beneath. The banks were carpeted with harmoniously blended blossoms of every conceivable colour and shape. Right ahead, on an expanse of rising ground, the wild hyacinths were present in such numbers as to produce the effect of a mist rising from the earth. The ivy, the moss, the multitude of ferns, and the many creeping and clinging plants assisted in producing a picture exceptionally pleasing, planned by that master hand at landscape gardening—Nature. Well might Scott sing of this grand garden :—

“ O ! Brignall banks are wild and fair,
And Greta woods are green ;
And you may gather garlands there
Would grace a summer queen.”

Reluctantly I left the delightful demesne. I knew that day I could not pursue my patient pastime, but the scene will never be erased from my memory. Our gentle sport leads us into many sweet spots, but seldom *so* sweet an one as this. I am miles away from Greta as I pen these lines, but a subtle and soothing influence steals over me, and the God-given aroma that arose from those innumerable blossoms reaches me o'er miles of blackened country.

Our jovial “jarvey,” was awaiting our arrival. We climbed into the dog-cart, and then came the question, “ What shall we do ? ” Ultimately we

decided to have a drive among the surrounding scenery. This we did, having first, as a necessary preliminary, refreshed ourselves and our horse at a quaint roadside hostelry with some whisky and water; and be it understood that friend Cummins, the "jarvey," and myself had the whisky, and our horse the water. To the best of my remembrance we lit our pipes, and as object after object of interest presented itself, it was pointed out to me by my friend, who knows the ins and outs of this country as well as I know Fetter-lane. Eventually we alighted at the entrance to a secluded villa residence, which an agent might well have described as "very desirable." Below us the Tees tumbled and tore its troubled way, and immediately beyond we had a complete and charming view of Barnard Castle town. Our driver and conveyance were dismissed, and I followed my friend through a carefully-kept garden, that vied with the Greta banks in profuseness of flowers and ferns, up to the jessamine and honeysuckle laden porch of the "very desirable villa residence."

Evidently my friend was quite at home here, for he opened the door and announced his arrival by calling out—"Anyone at home?" Presently appeared the pleasant and refreshing form of an attractive and rosy-cheeked damsel, who exclaimed: "Why, it's Mr. Cummins!" The gentleman in question smiled his assent to this assertion, and upon being introduced I had a cordial reception.

Then I learned the villa was the residence of Mr. H——and the r. c. d. was his grand-daughter. We were just in time for luncheon, and I for one

was not sorry this was the case. The drive and fresh air had given me an appetite worthy of Ben Brust. Mr. H——soon made his appearance, a stalwart Yorkshireman of about seventy years of age, hale and hearty, notwithstanding his advanced years. Very agreeable company he proved to be, but we heard with regret that his good lady was ill upstairs, and upon the r. c. d. devolved the responsibility of the domestic arrangements. The luncheon was served under her direction, and I found she was a host in herself. The handy little maid—she was not above 4ft. 6in., but plump—was just such a damsel that we read of as an ideal Yorkshire lass, a damsel that will make the happy man a model wife. She appeared to be very pleased to talk about fishing, and to my surprise proved to be a constant reader of the *Fishing Gazette*, and she does so like some of the Hon. Chaplain's articles, and Pritt's dog with the knob on its tail, has fairly won her young fresh heart.

The interest taken in fishing matters by the r. c. d. was explained after we had done justice to our meal. Mr. H—— was an ardent angler. By-the-bye, he had been in his earlier days a school-master, and he assured me that Dickens' description of a Yorkshire school was not at all overdrawn. Unfortunately, in many cases, the schools which were broken up by the appearance of "Nicholas Nickleby" (such is the power of the pen in a master hand) were only too similar to that conducted by Squeers.

When one is on a fishing holiday, of course the best thing is to go a-fishing, but if you can't fish, then the next best thing, I consider, is a pipe and chat with a brother angler. We three—Mr. H.,

friend Cummins, and myself—sat spinning yarns and comparing notes for several pleasant hours. At some future time I hope to give to my readers a few of the marvellous experiences related upon this occasion.

The weather throughout the day had been fine, and up till five o'clock in the evening everything promised for a start at the Greta trout on the following day. Armed with information imparted by Mr. H—— and W. J. C., I was prepared for a big day. I even went so far as to promise the r. c. d. a dish of trout, but it was not to be ; the clouds gathered, down came the rain, a perfect deluge, the words of the Yorkshire farmer I met in the train seemed well on the road to be verified, and the following day still found the Greta in flood !

SIR THOMAS DICK LAUDER, BART., AS
AN ANGLER.

It is nearly half a century since Sir Thomas Dick Lauder wielded the pen, and his noble and commanding form, long rich fair hair, happy blue eyes, and cheery voice were by the side of those Scottish rivers he loved so dearly. As the author of "The Moray Floods," "The Wolfe of Badenoch," etc., his name is familiar to many literary men; and his delightful descriptions of the rivers he knew so well, which appeared in *Tail's Magazine*, remain engraven upon the memory of those who have been fortunate enough to read them.

And yet how few followers of the gentle craft to-day are aware what an ardent angler he was, and how powerful his descriptions of angling and angling incidents were. The whole of his writings are interesting, but his references to angling are particularly pleasing to me, and, probably, will be to you, my readers, because we are anglers ourselves.

Perhaps I am stupid, but somehow I always think a deal more of an author if he occasionally refers to our peaceful pastime in his writings, and my admiration increases with his power of describ-

ing the lovely scenery amidst which our pastime is pursued, and the enthusiasm which fills the soul of every honest angler. Can it be wondered at, then, that Sir Thomas commands unlimited admiration on my part when he writes as follows :—

“The smallest burns among the hills connected with the Tweed will be found to afford panniers full of fine trout to the skilful angler who knows when to take their streams at the proper time, and in the right condition ; and there are few pleasures of the simple kind which can excel the delights of wandering alone through these solitary wildernesses of heath—guided by the thread of the little stream only, and dropping, as you move onwards, a shortened line over its banks, finding yourself ever and anon yoked with a fish that compels you in prudence to give him somewhat of his own way, and a little indulgence in the music of the reel, before you begin to think of drawing him gently near you, in order to lay your hands upon him. How agreeably does the lid of your willow basket utter its peculiar gently creaking sound, in welcome to the panting captive as you open it to insert him among those who have been placed there before him ; and all this occurs amid the solitude of Nature—the bleat of a lamb from the hill-side, or the hum of a bee from the heather bell, being all that may tell of the vicinity of animal life.”

Sir Thomas invariably carried his sketch-book with him, and it was often brought into requisition, at times entirely supplanting the rod, as the following will show. Speaking of the Cadon water, which flows into the Tweed a little below Clovenfords, he says :—

"This point of junction used to be a favourite rendezvous with the angler, and we have ourselves thrown at least as many lines into the streams of the Tweed here as, if arranged in pages, might have made a good thick volume. But the water must be in prime condition and the fish in a particularly taking humour when we come to this part of the river to enable us sufficiently to abstract ourselves from the enjoyment of the exquisite scenery which here suddenly bursts upon us so as to be able to pay the requisite attention to rod, line, and flies to secure that success which every angler must necessarily desire. This is one of the most beautiful parts of the Tweed, and well do we remember the day when, wandering in our boyhood up hither from Melrose, we found ourselves for the first time in the midst of scenery so grand and beautiful. The rod was speedily put up, and the fly-book was exchanged for the sketch-book. We wandered about from point to point, now and then reclining on the grass, and sometimes, from very wantonness, wading into the shallows of the clear stream; and so we passed away some hours of luxurious idleness, the pleasures of which we shall never cease to remember."

A little further on, speaking of the visit to St. Mary's Lake, he says :

"We carried fishing rods and tackle with us, and had determined to devote at least an hour or two to serious angling, but the beauty and novelty of the scenery made us quite unfit to do anything of the sort, or, in short, to do anything but enjoy nature."

Sir Walter Scott's description of the lake may well be quoted here :

"Thou know'st it well—nor fen nor sedge
 Pollute the clear lake's crystal edge;
 Abrupt and sheer the mountains sink
 At once upon the level brink;
 And just a trace of silver sand
 Marks where the water meets the land,
 Far in the mirror bright and blue
 Each hill's huge outline you may view.
 Shaggy with heath, but lonely bare,
 Nor tree nor bush, nor brake is there,
 Save where, of land, yon slender line
 Bears thwart the lake the scattered pine.

* * * * *
 There's nothing left to fancy's guess—
 You see that all is loneliness.

* * * * *
 Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
 So stilly is the solitude."

What a delicious *abandon* Sir Thomas has at times!

"The heat was so intense that we could not exist in the house, and accordingly our evenings were spent sitting listlessly on the terrace, in watching the gamekeepers fishing from the boats with their nets, in the enjoyment of the lovely scene and balmy air, and occasionally puffing a cigar or imbibing a refreshing draught of hock and soda-water."

The tale of the little parchment-faced man is capital. Here it is:

"We used to be attended in former days by a curious parchment-faced little man from the village of Newstead, called Anderson. He was a first-rate angler, and although he used to be soaked in the river every day up to his neck, he invariably appeared on the ensuing morning like a wet shoe that had been too hastily dried, and as if he had been shrivelled up into a smaller

compass than before. This was probably to be ascribed to the oceans of whisky which he poured down his throat after returning from the river to his own fireside at night. We well remember the risk we ran in fording the Tweed at some distance below the Fly Bridge, when the river was too large for prudent people to have made the attempt. Our wetting made some whisky necessary on our reaching a small inn on the North shore, and there Anderson took so much, that by the time we got down to Dryburgh, where we meant to fish, we were really afraid of his life when he proceeded to crash through the thicket of trees and shrubs that closely bordered the river's edge, in order to dash into the water like a poodle. Out went his line, however, and at the second cast it twisted in ten thousand Gordian knots, amidst the boughs above him. He was a furiously passionate little man, and he stamped in the water and raved like a demon. A servant climbed up to unravel this misfortune, for Anderson, in his then blind state, could not have done it in a whole week. Right glad to be thus assisted, he came ashore and sat down, and poured out a string of execrations on the Earl of Buchan and his trees. 'What's the use of them I should like to ken, but just to hank our lines and spoil our fishing; od, an' this place were mine, I would rugg out every buss, and fell every tree upon the lands.' He was no sooner free than he waded in to a depth that was very perilous in his then whiskified condition, and almost immediately hooked a salmon—and really when he and the fish were safely landed together we felt most thankful, for he had slipped and plunged about so, that we

more than once believed that rod, line, fish, and man would all have gone to Berwick."

His writings are enriched with anecdotes of many famous men with whom he associated. Speaking of the propagation of salmon and trout, he says :—

"It is a remarkable fact, and one which perhaps our gentle readers will not be prepared to expect, that the most interesting and instructive information that we ever had in our lives from any individual on the subject, we received at a private party in London, from the lips of the great Daniel O'Connell. He got upon the subject of Irish lakes and Irish rivers, and, with a fluency which perfectly astonished us, and which could only have arisen from a perfect knowledge of the subject, he gave us grand and beautiful, though rapid descriptions of their scenery ; enumerated all the different sorts of fish that inhabited their waters ; entered scientifically into the composition of the various flies which were necessary to render the angler successful in different parts of the country ; enlivened the whole with episodal anecdotes of particular days of angling ; and all this with an enthusiasm which, whilst it was full of poetical imagery, was no whit less in degree than if he had been advocating his favourite cause of justice to Ireland. The party was an exceedingly small one, assembled at the house of an official friend, and we have no doubt that it was marked by the newspapers as one in which some important political plans were hatching, whereas not a word was uttered upon the subject."

Sir Thomas was a great admirer of Thomson's

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writings, and strongly asserts that the lack of interest among the readers of his "Seasons" was due rather to a perversion in general taste than any fault in Thomson's poetry itself.

CHRISTMAS AT THE CLUBS.

Contributed to the columns of "The Fishing Gazette" as the wind-up to a series of articles on "The London Angling Clubs."

I could write several columns describing the Christmas outings, prizes and meetings of the London Clubs, but my space is limited ; still, as an appropriate wind up to the "London Angling Clubs" for this year, I purpose devoting a few paragraphs to the subject.

"Man proposes and God disposes." I am afraid that so far as the outings are concerned, the Christmas programme will be an utter failure. Fishing is entirely at a standstill ; enormous quantities of snow have fallen, and on all sides can be heard the ring of the skates and the delightful "humming" occasioned by the many skaters cutting over the ice-covered rivers and ponds. Even if a thaw come, before the rivers are fishable, Christmas, 1890, will have passed away and young 1891 will have entered upon his career.

But the prizes have been offered, and upon the night of presentation are ready in the meeting room. You may rest assured that some means have been found of arranging who is entitled to

them, for such things as joints of beef, turkeys, geese, fowls, and bottles of that liquor so frequently referred to in connection with angling and anglers *won't keep*. Of course, we would rather know that Dick is entitled to the first choice because he has weighed in most fish, and so on ; but, under the circumstances, we must be satisfied to know that Dick has by some means become entitled to a prize, and he is there to receive it. There is no cause for the secretary to complain of his non-attendance upon this occasion.

The value and number of the prizes depend upon the strength of the club, but the one I shall take the reader to is a fair sample. Come with me then to the Golden Pelican in Shoreditch, for the club I intend you to visit is a working man's club. At the bar we ask for the secretary, who at once appears and conducts us upstairs to the meeting room. The tables are fairly groaning beneath the weight of good things, and seated round the room are the members divided into groups, discussing their past triumphs and failures and the prospects of sport in the near future. A stranger may well be surprised at the curious collection that forms the prizes. Beef, pork and mutton are here, and festoons of sausages ; bottles of whisky, brandy, gin and rum, boxes of cigars, and pounds and half-pounds of tobacco. We are attracted to a large child's doll, and upon inquiry learn that Bill has won fifteen shillings and sixpence worth, and has decided to "take it out" in a pair of sheets for the "missus," and a doll for their little one. We also learn that the champion roachist of the club has once again decided to stand his "old dutch" a

new bonnet out of his winnings, and as the rule of the club is "all prizes must be exhibited," there is the bonnet, and a very smart one it is, too.

Then a ticket tells us that one member has decided to have half-a-ton of coals for his prize, and as they cannot very well be exhibited, a sample "chunk" is shown adjacent to the ticket; if those coals are up to sample they are good ones. Here is a plum pudding, and close to it a pair of trousers! The cause of the trousers being there interests us, so we ask for information and learn that for three or four years past the owner has had "a joint and a bottle," but this year his thrifty wife has been paying into a local Christmas club, with the result that *she* has obtained all the necessities for the Christmas festivities, and has told her Jim that as he appears to want a new pair of trousers he had better have them. And so on through the list.

Two things strike us at once. First, the unselfishness of the winners. In most cases the prizes won are consumable and consumed at home. A string of sausages and $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of tobacco, a joint and a bottle, and the many other prizes, all point to the fact that in his choice the winner has thought of his wife, familiarly known as "the missus," or "the old dutch." Secondly, the "well pleased with everything" feeling, easily discernible among the whole of those present, winners and non-winners. Not the slightest trace of jealousy is to be seen anywhere.

The presentation is over, and the lucky members, loaded with their prizes depart. We will follow their example, for the hour of midnight is

close at hand. We are pleased with what we have seen, and are nearly prepared to forgive a lot of "tiddler-taking" under the genial influence of the surrounding circumstances.

LADY ANGLERS AND ANGLERS' WIVES.

The interminable march of progressive events leaves little to be desired in the way of positive evidence that many of those "dem'd fascinating creatures," as Mr. Mantalini termed our lady friends, no longer consider their share of a day's fishing consists in carefully and lavishly packing the luncheon basket, with comestibles to be consumed by the "lords of creation" when on angling bent.

No ; they have decided to accompany us upon these enjoyable occasions, assist in the consumption of the good things, and also participate in the joys, sorrows, hopes, fears, successes and disappointments of angling.

I am not prepared to admit that this arrangement will upon most occasions considerably enhance the *enjoyment*, even though the two things we love most in this life,—our wives or sweethearts, and the sport of angling,—are for the time combined ; it is possible to have too much of a good thing. On the other hand, I am not one of those who look forward with dread and dismay to the time when nurse will wheel baby to the water-side, and carefully watch over our latest addition to the family circle, while

"mamma" with deft hand, and skill acquired from long practice accurately places the winged lure over the rising trout. No ! I believe in the maintenance of the happy medium. I believe our lady friends are more often better occupied in seeing to the drying of our waders and wading socks, than in wearing some of their own ! But I see no objection to them participating in our sport *at times*. I would grant them a liberal measure for local self-government, but not Home Rule !

The first important fact we have to consider in this connection is that, beyond doubt, a movement is being made to include more ladies among the ranks of qualified anglers ("qualified" is a good word !), and this movement is being fostered and assisted very considerably by many piscators of the sterner sex. Woman, lovely woman ! has decided to play cricket, ride cycles, hunt, shoot, and fish, and why should she not ? We may just as well make a virtue of necessity : she has said she *will*—

" An' if she will—she WILL,
You may depend on't ;
An' if she won't—she WON'T
An' there's an end on't !"

So having grasped this, to many of us, startling fact, it next behoves us to look the matter firmly in the face, and meet the difficulty—if difficulty it be—with a manly resolve to make the best of it !

Those of us who are reluctant to give way at all let them not yield without a struggle what they *have* to part with, consoling themselves the while after each defeat—for defeated they will certainly be !—with the consideration that after all we shall have our pipes, tobacco and whisky flask left, for

I doubt if the latter articles will ever be generally adopted by the so-called weaker sex.

They will also have the consolation of knowing that the milliner's and dressmaker's bills will be considerably reduced—it is wonderful how the cost of the bribes exacted by anglers' wives when a fishing trip is mentioned mount up; those "sweetly pretty" bonnets and "so becoming" dresses run into pretty penny! This will be altered, for when you "go a-fishing" your wife will have the chance of accompanying you, and the old dress and bonnet will do!

Yet another consolation for the desponding angler. No longer will your wife thank you for that lovely salmon or beautiful brace of trout you sent her from Scotland, Ireland, or elsewhere, as the case may be, and then innocently (?) remark :

"I hope the man did not overcharge you, dear; they have only been so-and-so a pound here."

No! she will have become an angler herself, and will know herself how keenly sensitive anglers are to such ill-advised remarks. She will learn that anglers scorn to buy fish, and then send them home or to their friends as the result of their skill!

Yet again; when you return home after a long and unsuccessful day she will not sarcastically ask if the fish are being brought round by the porter, neither will she unmercifully chaff you about "bad weather," "wind in the wrong quarter," "no fly out," "too bright," or "fish off the feed," she will know that upon all these things much of our success depends, and know-

ing this will not inflict such terrible tongue chastisement as in her present unhappy state of ignorance she is apt to.

Perhaps, best of all, she will discontinue to rate you about wasting your time looking over your rods, reels, flies, and "things." She will no longer consider you would be better occupied in looking to the front window that has something wrong with it, fastening the castor on the arm-chair that is rapidly tearing the carpet into pieces, looking to that cornice pole, or seeing what is wrong with the night latch. She will know that an intricate study of an angler's outfit is of far greater importance, and a complete overhauling absolutely necessary previous to an outing.

Therefore, console yourselves: out of evil cometh good!

An acquaintance of mine views with undisguised horror this "innovation of the sex," as he terms it. But he has hit upon a sure preventative, or fancies he has.

"Worms! Shrubsole," he said to me only lately, "worms will stop this absurd innovation of the sex from ever becoming anything really dangerous to our sport, quiet pipe, and delightful stroll home in the cool of the evening. Upon worms we must depend, and we can do so with every confidence. The woman is not living who can handle them. All we have got to do when the women will persist in accompanying us is to use worms for bait, and nothing but worms—big, fat, ugly, black lobs! Harden our hearts we must, Shrubsole, or else what will become of our freedom when fishing? They must not have the

worms put on the hook for them—they must be told to do it themselves ; and, mark my words, they never will ! ”

I am afraid my friend is a little too hard upon would-be lady anglers, but, poor chap, he is to be pitied ! His experience has been a bitter one. His first wife—he has been married twice, one would have thought he would have known better !—had a great objection to him “going-a-fishing,” and a hatred of the large bait tank and wormery he had erected at the back part of the house. Upon one occasion, when he returned home from business, noticing a large pile of bricks of salt in the kitchen, he asked what they were for, and was told the grocer had sent them in mistake. The next evening he strolled down to the tank, and to his great surprise and grief found the whole of a lovely lot of dace, belly upwards, floating on the top of the water in the tank—dead ; and upon examining his wormery he found the late occupants reduced to “a jelly,” as he expressed it. The extra supply of salt had been utilised to some purpose by his wife—she had salted his live bait and worms !

But, thank goodness, all anglers’ wives are not so bad as that. As a matter of fact there are many ladies who would make valuable additions to the angling world, and seriously speaking, I am inclined to believe we are somewhat selfish where our favourite sport is concerned. While not advocating the ideas of those who would start our lady friends off fully equipped in waders, brogues and fishing costume, wielding a heavy salmon rod, and plunging through pools in pursuit of the king of fresh-water fishes, I

am nevertheless convinced that much of the sport that is so healthy and pleasant for us would be equally so for them, and this being the case, why should they not participate in it? I do not believe in the advisability of anglers' wives continually accompanying their husbands on fishing excursions; but I do think an occasional day so spent would not be regretted by either party; moreover, I think that as *we* have better sport, and realise keener enjoyment when we have obtained some amount of skill in the art, the ladies should be induced to become experts; and what better teachers can they have than their husbands or sweethearts?

They say an angler is born, and probably there is as much truth in the assertion as in the similar one that an artist is born; be this as it may, some ladies will never become even fairly skilful in the art, much the same as some men will never be able to fish if they live to be as old as Methuselah. On the other hand, there are many lady anglers who are proficient in the art, we especially find that where they essay fly-fishing they often prove experts; even the lordly salmon knows this to his cost.

I well remember fishing a private length of a Midland river some few years ago. Sport had been fast and furious. My creel was nearly filled, and, the day being warm, I sat down under the friendly shade of a tree, and lazily watched the trout rising on a length of the water extended before me. Presently round the bend (the river was flowing from me towards it) I noticed a fly-rod at work, evidently being handled by a master of the art.

By-the-bye have you noticed how easily a good fly-fisherman can be recognised by the action of the rod he is using? Even though the angler himself may be out of sight, a glance at the amount of work he gets out of the rod, and the manner in which it is handled, proclaims the fact. The *rod is master* of an indifferent fisherman, and a bad master, too! In the hands of an expert it becomes a useful and willing servant. The rod I noticed coming round the bend was, beyond doubt, the servant of the angler. By its means the line was propelled with that easy and regular swing which is so interesting to watch, and so great and useful a reward to the angler who, through sheer perseverance and constant practice, can accomplish it. Judge of my surprise, then, when the angler came in view, accompanied by a lad carrying the creel and landing-net. That length of water was being fished in a manner creditable to the most skilful exponent of the art by a feminine follower of the gentle craft. Successfully fished, too! for before she arrived at the spot where I was resting, a brace of good trout had been skilfully hooked, carefully played, and quietly landed. Nothing but the fear of a breach of etiquette prevented me from calling out, "Well killed!" The lady passed on, and I soon after resumed fishing. Later on in the evening I learned this lady angler held a high position in society, as she assuredly does in the angling world; and I hope, if these remarks should be brought to her notice, she will excuse my temerity in mentioning the instance.

Yet another example of the skilful lady

angler, and this time she graces the ranks of the bottom fishers. On a certain south-country stream, noted for its store of aldermanic roach, the angler of indifferent skill stands little chance of filling his creel, notwithstanding the river is well stocked—the duffer has no chance at all. Here the finest tackle is requisite, and, in fact, a knowledge of all the “ins and outs” of the craft is necessary to ensure success. Probably, nine out of every ten anglers who fish here do so to little purpose ; one of the most successful belongs to the “gentler sex.” I have often asserted that the cleaner the bait for roach is—both ground and hook bait—the better reward the angler is likely to have for his trouble. This lady angler is very particular in the cleanly preparation and use of her bait. I do not propose to dilate upon the baits she uses, and the manner of their manipulation by her ; suffice it to say many roach fishers could learn a wrinkle or two from her. With the tight line or light leger, she renders a good account of herself, and she has few superiors in the fishing known as “long corking.” In the river I allude to there are many runs between long waving weeds, and here she proves an adept in the art of hooking Mr. Roach “fine and far off,” and calmly drawing him to her side.

Yes ! depend upon it there are many skilful lady anglers, and many more who take a great interest in the sport and would like to become experts. Recently there appeared in the columns of the *Fishing Gazette* an article from the pen of a lady angler, and those who read, “A Lady’s Day on the Stour,” must have been impressed with the keen interest the fair writer unmistakably exhibited in

the day's pursuit of those knowing trout that inhabit that lovely Kentish stream. After detailing the various failures and vexations that are inevitably associated with a first day on a strange stream, in a truly delightful manner, she describes the catching of a trout after all thoughts of success had fled, and her language and mode of expression are so far superior to my own that I venture to quote her own words :—

“ The hours passed, the shadows lengthened ; sheep gathered round me as if attracted by some family likeness, which rudeness on their part I was too far dejected to resent. At last I knew it was time to return to the inn. I was beaten, defeated. The glorious opportunity of being the first woman who had ever caught a fish on those waters was for ever gone. My wretched fly had become a misshapen mass that sunk at each throw.

“ One more attempt I would make over that slimy green stuff by the bank, and then I must go.

“ Whir-r-r ! away rushed my line, round and round flew my reel. I nearly fell into the water at the suddenness of the occurrence, but as yards of my line disappeared rapidly, so did my despondency. I was all alertness and keenly alive to the necessity of calm behaviour and cool action.

“ Oh ! the excitement of such a moment ! The fears, the hopes, the thousand tremors that make each instant appear an age ! Would my slender rod bear the strain ? Would the fish reach the rapids yonder, or perhaps dive under the bridge and break my line ? What if, after all, I should lose it ? Failure at such a crisis is worse to bear than total lack of even a chance of success. It is

so difficult in such cases to convince your absent friends of the great size of the lost fish, and of the utter impossibility of landing such a huge creature alone and unaided.

"Oh, joy! The trout at last shows signs of exhaustion. Now is the time to be cautious; gentle coaxing is never more needed than at such a time. At last I could sing victory! For the glorious creature was lying on the grass at my feet, while I stood gazing with rapture on the very best fish that has ever been taken from the Stour with a fly. I make this statement in the full assurance that there is not one single member of the association who will venture to contradict me.

"One of my friends who had watched the landing of the fish very kindly performed the merciful though disagreeable act of killing it, and a few moments later no happier or prouder woman wended her way home that evening than the desponding being of half-an-hour before."

I think I may safely assert that a lady angler who can not only fish, but also write in that manner of the sport we all love so well, is very worthy of being placed in the front rank of the great army of piscators.

The lady angler who, accompanied by noisy companions, in a boat or on the bank, seems to delight in doing all she can to drive the fish miles away, is as great a nuisance as her prototype of the male persuasion—a gentleman we meet, unfortunately, too often. The gushing young lady who declares that fishing "is perfectly lovely," but the worms and gentles are "nasty horrid creatures," and who uses gloves when baiting her hook with wheat and paste, can be put up with when one feels

inclined to be amused at anything, no matter how frivolous or absurd it may be. But the sharp-featured, vinegar-faced virago of about 5ft. 10in. in height, who takes her husband of about 5ft. 4in. out for a day's fishing when she thinks proper, or sees he comes to no harm while spending a week at a fishing hotel, is——, well! like the Yankee and the crow-pie, I don't hanker arter it!

I remember staying at an hotel some few years ago, when one of this latter type of lady angler was looking after her husband while he indulged in some fishing for the only fortnight in the year that he could get right away from the cares of business. I had been there two or three days, when one evening, as I was sitting in the billiard-room watching my fishing chum, who really can play a good game of billiards, "taking it out of" a somewhat consequential individual, who fancied he could play, but couldn't, a dapper little fellow came into the room and asked for the gentleman who had been lucky enough to kill a big trout that day—an exceptionally big one it was for that water. As I happened to be the successful piscator he immediately came over to me, and sitting down, entered into conversation. He asked me what I thought was the best parts of the water, the most killing flies, etc., and altogether proved a very interesting specimen of the average angler at an hotel water, who "wants to know, you know." One thing impressed me at this first interview, he was very "perky;" but this is a fault most little people are said to have. I invited him to have an hour or two's fishing with me; but this offer he declined in a manner I

could hardly understand that evening. In the morning the explanation came in the shape of his wife, who was one of the viragoes I have alluded to. Poor little chap! All his "perkiness" had vanished, and all that was left was a meek, gentle, obedient husband—one of those "Yes, my dear," "No, my dear," "Certainly, my dear," sort. And the wife—well, even the boatman had enough of her before a week was out. The little man had to wait on the big wife, and as for the sport and pleasure he himself had—well, it was of a peculiar sort from my way of thinking. Naturally we saw each other frequently, he was always "perky" when not with his wife, and meek and humble when that lady had him in tow. I suppose she must have been fond of him in her way, for upon one occasion when stepping ashore from the boat he made a slip, and plumped into the water. Catching hold of the boatman with an iron grip, the lady screamed out: "Oh, my poor little man! He will drown, I am sure he will! Save him! Save him!" The poor little man scrambled ashore little the worse for his ducking, and I rather fancy must have got a good lecture for his carelessness, for he did not turn up to dinner that night! It is marvellous the effect successful angling has on the most vinegary temperament. One day the lady had a really good catch of trout, and that evening she was, for her, wonderfully amiable, and the little man was allowed to stop up an extra hour, a privilege he made the most of, too much in fact, for he got quite enough whisky, went to bed slightly muddled, and his hour in the billiard-room next evening was stopped altogether!

A marked contrast to this last-mentioned type of lady angler, was brought to my notice some years back, and although at the time both parties concerned were merely children, yet I am certain the young lady has grown into a true disciple of Izaak Walton and a faithful and loving wife. She possessed the making of both when I saw her and her childhood's sweetheart, fishing together. The lad, seated upon the bank, was busy catching the small rudd that swarmed in the pond they were fishing, and she, by his side, was baiting the hook with small pieces of paste, for each time the young "lord of creation" caught a fish, having released the hook from the last victim to his skill, he would carelessly swing it in her direction. She was a born angler without doubt. You could tell by merely watching her bright, sunny face when the lad had a bite, when the fish was captured, and when the hook was swung in her direction to be re-baited. How carefully was the paste placed upon the hook! How eagerly the advent of another bite was awaited!

I am inclined to conclude these few rambling remarks upon lady anglers and anglers' wives, with this last peaceful picture, but probably this paper would be worse than incomplete if I did not allude to a very important matter.

Granted that we ought not to object to our wives and sweethearts participating in the sport and pleasures of angling—I am inclined to think we should encourage them in doing so—let us hope they will never become fishing members of angling clubs, let us hope the day is far distant when they will "weigh in" for prizes. To them

the art of angling should prove attractive as a sport and a means of healthy recreation, and nothing further should be needed to commend it to their favour.

As we return home from a day's angling with our wives or sweethearts, may the thoughts of copper-kettles and sets of mugs be far distant ! May we never degrade our beloved sport in the eyes of our wives more than we would degrade those loved ones in the eyes of the world !

The influence of lady anglers should go far to stem the torrent of *excessive* prize fishing. Our lady friends can, and will, I hope, do much to once more place the art of angling upon a higher pedestal than it at present, unfortunately, occupies. They can prove that it has sufficient attraction without the aid of a lengthy club prize list, and they can demonstrate the fact that if the "lords of creation" cannot fish without competing for a dinner-service or a sack of coals, they at least desire nothing of the kind when they—

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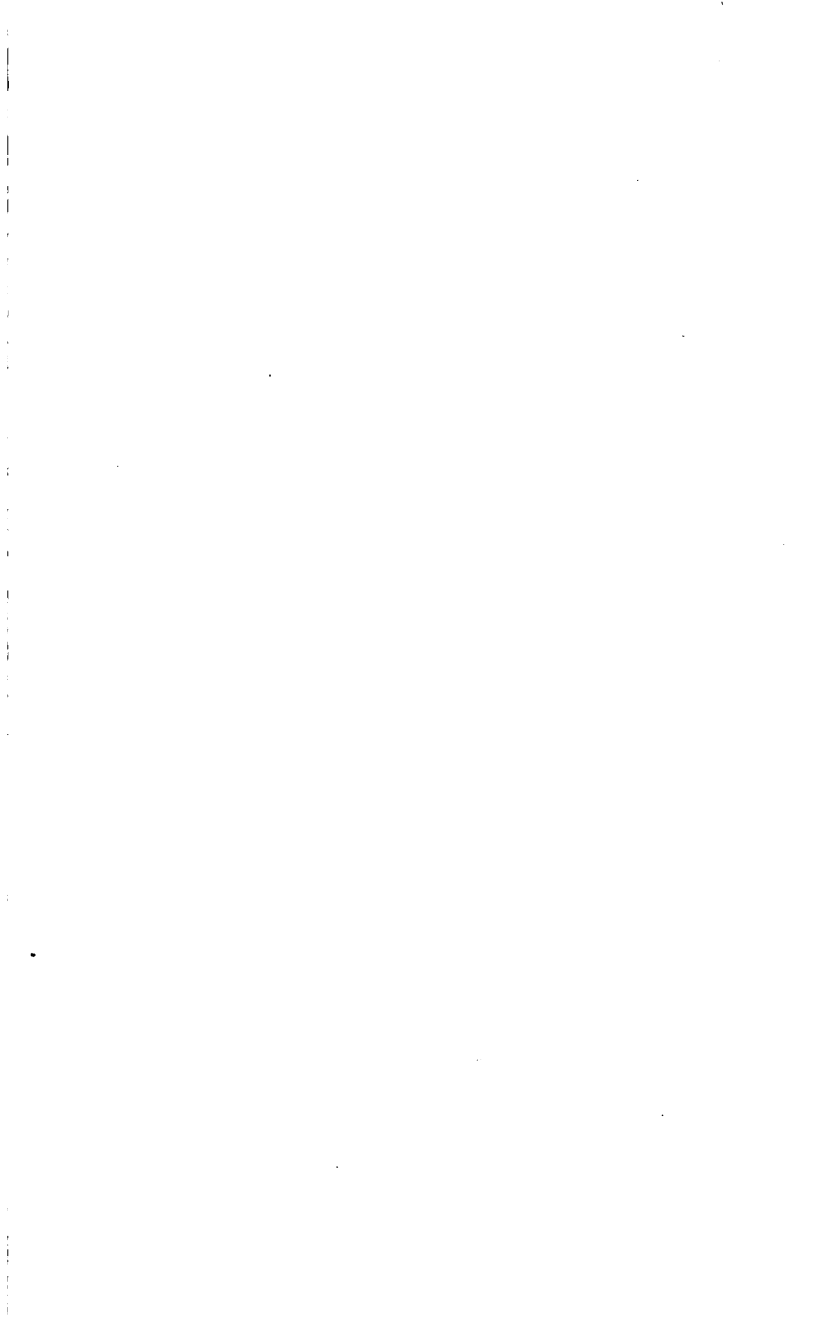
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